A Quarterly of New Literature

# ACCENT

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*Ida M'Toy*

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*Goethe and Rilke—*
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*Affectation of*
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*Newspaper Story*

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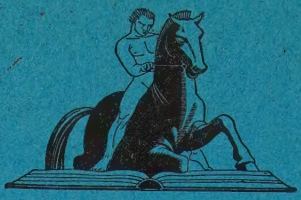
SUMMER, 1942



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## NEW DIRECTIONS

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ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

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# WILMA SHORE:

## *Newspaper Story*

Audrey Coppersmith had always wanted to go to business college to be a bookkeeper. But by the time she was finished high school it was a dead issue. Her father's income had shrunk considerably and anyhow her mother couldn't see the whole idea. So Audrey applied at the personnel bureau for a plain typing job.

They didn't have anything, but they sent her over to Mr. and Mrs. Serman, who wanted someone to stay with their little girl several evenings a week while they went out. Audrey got fifty cents, and more after midnight. She took the bus over, but Mr. Serman drove her home because she had a long walk to her house and you always read about women being hit on the head or kidnapped on the dark streets.

Maybe it wasn't much of a job, but it was something for the time being, and the Sermans were very nice. Mrs. Serman was a tall blonde woman, quiet and pleasant and kind of careless, careless about getting out on time or about the house or about telling Audrey what to do for the little girl.

Mr. Serman was nice, too, and good-looking, tall with black wavy hair and a long, kind of twisted face. He was a college man, about thirty-three, and awfully funny, always joking or kidding around, in a nice way. He had the funniest German accent, the way he used to call in to Mrs. Serman, "Get a moof on already!" Or he would make the most innocent thing sound naughty—if you said, "You want to see my new pen and pencil set?" he would lift his eyebrows and say, "Please—! Not here!" as though you had said, well, you know. Or he could twist words around, somehow, so they were strange. For instance, Chuck would say, "Is it ever raining!" But Mr. Serman would say, "This is a fine day to cut your throat!" or "Some waterworks!"

But it was the way he said it, and the things he did with his hands. Not like Chuck pulling his finger across his throat like cutting it, but things Audrey had never seen anyone do before, except maybe Bob Hope in the movies.

Of course Chuck was a good kid and she really was lucky to have a nice boy friend. In all fairness she wasn't very pretty, so tall and thin, with straight hair that wasn't either red or blonde. Actually, she didn't have anything against Chuck except the way her mother went on about him. Every time she happened to mention Mr. Serman her mother would say, "My goodness, you certainly have that man on your mind. You never seem to have anything to say about Chuck!" And then she would say what a nice wholesome boy he was and the right age for Audrey and all. She just harped on it, the way she used to harp on Audrey's homework.

Audrey didn't really talk about Mr. Serman so much. But after all, she was around him constantly, and she felt kind of close to him. She knew which chair he liked best, how he took a glass of beer before he went to bed, how he had to shave twice a day if he went out at night.

She never even tried to explain it to her mother, but when she sat in the Serman's house all evening, she got the feeling that she belonged there, almost as if it was her house instead of Mrs. Serman's. Often when they came back it seemed all wrong to get up and go. Sometimes she would even drop off to sleep on the couch. Then suddenly she would wake up blinking and there would be Mrs. Serman's heels going inside to the bedroom and Mr. Serman standing there laughing.

One night they came home late and she was so sound asleep she could hardly wake up even outside. She sat back with her eyes closed feeling the car rush through the dark streets. Chuck made her nervous the way he drove, but with Mr. Serman it was like a magic carpet. When they stopped she thought it was just a red light. Then she felt his hand patting her head and he said, "Wake up, little girl, time to get out." He had never called her that before, it was what her father used to call her. When Mr. Serman said it, it sounded different. She opened her eyes and looked at him and just smiled.

The next morning her mother said, "Why can't he get you home at a decent hour, Audrey?" And Audrey just made believe she didn't hear.

Since she had stopped going to school or anything, she had begun to think a lot during the day. Things like coming into a crowded room and all the men turning to stare, or a strange man coming up to her in the street and saying wonderful clever things and her answering the same way and his picking a single sprig of honeysuckle for her hair, things like that. But now the man was always Mr. Serman. It didn't mean anything. It didn't hurt anyone.

Sometimes she even thought that way when she was out with Chuck, in his stuffy old car. And the thoughts were always so much better than Chuck, Chuck was so young and his skin still bumpy and she could always tell what he was going to say. She got so when he tried to park along the

road at night she would say she had a headache, or her mother wanted her home early. Toward the end of the summer he began to get mad because she would never kiss him any more. Once they fought, a silent fight in the front seat of his car, the two of them twisting, shoving, bumping their knees against the dashboard.

But in the Sermans' house no one bothered her. She could draw the curtains and turn on the radio and dance. She could study her face in the mirror over the buffet and think. Mr. Serman would come in after a day at the office and sweep her into his strong arms and kiss her. Then he would say, "Oh, boy! Something smells divine. I could eat a two-car garage!" They would come in late at night and stand around while he had some beer, and suddenly he would put his glass down and tilt back her head and look into her eyes. Her hair would be gleaming gold and done in braids, coronet style, like Norma Shearer in that picture. . . .

By October her mother was beginning to harp on her looking for a real job, salesgirl, maybe, since there wasn't anything for a typist. She honestly tried to find one, she knew her mother needed the money, but she was relieved, in a way, when nothing turned up. Standing behind a counter all day, with a lot of strange women at you all the time. And it would mean leaving the Sermans.

She didn't have anything particular to get up for in the morning, so she stayed in bed late, especially when she had been over there the night before. Mostly she just fooled around the house, mending or fixing her nails or doing exercises to develop herself a little more. Mrs. Serman was quite full, almost plump. Of course she helped her mother, but no more than she had to. It made her hate to lift a finger, the way her mother acted, bossing her around all the time.

She found a magazine article about being an interesting person. Do things, it said. Be active in your church, your woman's club. But Audrey's family had never been churchgoers. And she wasn't old enough for a woman's club. It told about one woman getting to be friends with her neighbors and helping them in moments of stress. Audrey tried talking with Mrs. Holdred next door but nothing came of it. Audrey wasn't the type, anyhow, it was awfully hard for her to speak to strange people. She got some wool for a sweater from the Red Cross, but when she reached the shoulder it just didn't make sense; she finally brought it back and told them she was leaving town. Anyway, what was so interesting about knitting? It would have been different if she could have made bandages, like during the Revolution, or melted down statues for bullets.

Saturday nights she just sat home reading. Her mother kept saying, "Why doesn't Chuck call any more? What did you do to him? It's very peculiar, a girl of your age that would rather moon around the house than go out with a nice young boy!"

One morning she finally faced the issue. She didn't have anything to do and she was just walking around her room. Suddenly she went up to the dresser and looked at herself in the glass. "Let's face it," she told her-

self. "You're in love with the man." All at once she felt wonderful. She was really in love. There was like beautiful music all around. When she found out she was going to Sermans' house that night, she got so jumpy she couldn't eat a bite of lunch.

Everything was clear now. Here was Audrey Coppersmith, almost seventeen, with nothing to do, no aim, nothing that meant anything. And suddenly here was Audrey Coppersmith with a purpose, with a core. Like pins to a magnet all the facts of her life settled in order around this main, this basic fact that she was actually in love.

Her heart bounced so she could barely sit in the bus. There was meaning to all the faces across the aisle, as if it were part of a movie. When she walked up the Sermans' street, the night air smelled of some tropical vine. She stood on the doorstep and trembled.

He opened the door. "Come in, my love!" he said, and bowed. It made a sweet pain in her chest because she knew he didn't mean it like that, that was just the way he talked. She walked in stiffly and tried to act the same as always. But everything she did, taking off her coat, putting her magazine on the table, sitting down, saying goodbye when they left, it was all different now.

There was an apple core on the table. He loved apples. She held the core against her mouth and tried to fit her teeth where his had been, his white crooked teeth. Then suddenly she thought, maybe it was *her* apple.

She went into the bathroom and looked through the medicine cabinet. There was the tonic for his black hair. Powder for his face after shaving. A box of laxative tablets; those must be hers. She tried to figure which was his toothbrush. She opened up his razor and then put it together again. She took a little lipstick tissue and closed her lips on it. They left a wide red ring. She laid the tissue on the edge of the basin. If he went into the bathroom first, he might know it was a kiss left for him.

She had often glanced into their bedroom, but now she went right in. Standing inside where she could see all the corners, she felt the room looked different. It was in a terrible mess. Mrs. Serman's clothes lay all over the bed and on the chair. Her night table and her bureau were full of medicine bottles, magazines, nail polish, perfumes, water-wave combs, earrings, old envelopes. Audrey held his pipe in the palm of her hand, as he did, and smelled it. It didn't smell nice. There were several blond hairpins on his night table. She gathered them together and put them on Mrs. Serman's bureau. She smelled all the perfume. Then she glanced into the closet. A brassiere and a girdle were lying among the shoes on the floor. How could he ever stand such a mess? She leaned down to pick them up and then straightened. Instead she took Mrs. Serman's nightgown and robe and dropped them on the floor too. His pajamas were a pale blue, with darker blue stripes. They smelled like him. Holding them against her cheek, she sank down on the floor. She sat there, on the shoes, for some time.

She was dancing in the front room when the door opened and they

walked in. She hadn't heard the car in the driveway because of the radio. She stopped dead in the middle of the floor. Mrs. Serman went right through. "I'll try to find those letters," she said. "You can mail them while you're out."

Audrey heard her only dimly. Mr. Serman was standing near the door. He was magnified a thousand times and all brilliant like a Christmas tree, she couldn't look at him. The radio was playing a song about love. She started across the room to turn it off and then she heard him coming after her and he put his arms around her.

It was so sudden. She turned and threw her arms around his neck.

It was the most awful thing that ever happened to her. It was as if she was coming out of the ether and there he was far away on the other side of the room, and she just put on her coat, fooling with the sleeves till Mrs. Serman came back with the letters. All the way home in the car it was like when she had her tonsils out, being sick and not wanting to think. She sat as far from him as she could get. When they stopped he started to say something but she just said "Goodnight" and jumped out of the car. She ran up to the house to tell her mother she was going to get a real good job right away, she knew she could, and she was never going back to Sermans'.

Her mother was darning. She said, "That's fine, but you can still go back till you get something else." And when Audrey said no, she would get something real soon and not go back at all, her mother just said, "Why not?" All Audrey could think to say was that she was sick and tired of the place. She couldn't tell what had happened, how she had put her arms around him, not knowing he just wanted to dance with her, and he had pushed her away.

"Well, that's a fine thing," said her mother, and Audrey suddenly realized that she was terribly mad. "Your father and I slave all day but her ladyship is sick and tired, she has to throw up her job right away because she's sick and tired of it." She folded the sock she had darned and her hands were tight and trembling, like her voice. "When are you ever going to grow up, Audrey," she asked, looking her angrily in the eyes.

It was so unexpected and so awfully unfair. Audrey couldn't speak. "Don't you *think* of giving up that job until you get something else!" said her mother. "No matter how sick and tired you are. Don't you *think* of it." and Audrey turned and went slowly toward the door.

Halfway across she stumbled over the armchair. She put her hands on it and looked back at her mother. "I thought you'd be glad," she said. "I thought you didn't even like Mr. Serman. I thought you thought I was so—silly about him."

Her mother looked at her for a long moment. Then she threw the darned sock into the workbasket. "Never you mind what I thought," she said. "Sick and tired. . . ."

Mrs. Serman called the next day, but luckily her mother was at the store, so Audrey said she had a bad cold and couldn't come for several

days. She got to work to find a job fast. She read the morning paper and typed beautiful letters of application and went downtown to the agencies. Four days in a row. But she had no experience. She was too young. And worst of all, she couldn't make an impression. People talked to her for a few minutes and then said they'd let her know and she knew they never would. She would stand up and walk out every time she had to fight with herself before she went in the next place.

At night she lay awake thinking. He came across the room and tried to put his arm around her but she wheeled and struck him full in the face. "Don't you dare put your dirty hands on me!" she cried. "You with your messy wife and your dirty jokes. Keep your hands to yourself!"

The fifth day she just could not go downtown.

Then she found she couldn't stand it in the house, the way it looked and the way it smelled, the buttery toast crumbs on the breakfast table and the faded taffeta spread on her bed and the way her mother's hair wisped out in back. But she couldn't go out, Mrs. Serman would be calling and if she was out her mother would make a date for her. She stuck in the house two days. And then when Mrs. Serman did call, her mother got to the phone first anyhow. So Audrey had to say she could come the next evening.

She locked herself in her room and stood looking out of the window at the back yard. It was twilight. Tomorrow night, tomorrow night she had to go back, she had to walk in and say hello and stand there in the same room with him and ride home with him in the car.

She knelt and put her forehead down on the window sill.

After a while she went into the hall and got the phone book. She looked up a boy from high school. He had dated her once but she didn't like him much and then she started going steady with Chuck anyhow. She called him and he said he would be over after dinner. She went in to dress. Now she had stopped thinking.

He was a plump boy, with light blue eyes that were round because his face was so full, and sort of shapeless clothes. He walked on his heels, heavy and hard. He kept starting to say things and then they would just die away in the middle.

They saw a movie and had a fudge sundae and he showed her how the top of his car went up and down automatically by pushing the button. Then he said, "Let's take a little drive along the ocean."

She knew he was surprised when she said yes. She had been mean all evening. While he was talking she would glance aimlessly away. She could feel those light eyes following hers with anxiety and she just couldn't look at them.

He was a good driver, anyhow, and he had the top down. She rested her head back with the wind against her face and thought mean things about him. He was stupid and fat and just a child. He was like a tub of sweet butter that if you stuck in your finger would take the shape of your finger. He drove along the beach a ways and parked. It was dark, no

moon. Just the pale white lines of the breaking waves along the black water. She sat and looked out over the ocean, as calm as you please, making it harder for him.

Finally he offered her a cigarette, and while he lit it, as though the tiny match flame made everything more sociable, he said, "Let's go down on the sand." Something jumped inside her, and because she was afraid it was fright she said, "All right," quickly. They climbed down to the beach. She could hear him stumbling over the rocks after her, and every time he caught up and tried to take her elbow she jumped quickly past him.

They sat down on the sand and watched the waves break and hiss up the beach. They made a soft booming. At intervals, the headlights of cars on the road behind them shone for a moment on the water.

After a while he put his arm around her, hesitantly, not leaning its full weight on her shoulders so that she was terribly aware of it. Then he began to talk fast. "What a night, oh, boy, some night for the beach. No moon, though, but that's all right, isn't it? We don't mind, do we?" and his arm gave her a quick convulsive hug and held her close against his body.

She sat looking at her legs stretched out on the sand in front of her. Her heart was beating loud. Then the arm shifted nervously, and the loose fingers hung down against her chest. She shrugged her shoulder, as though she was cold, but the hand returned to the same position. Wholesome, she thought ironically. In a way it was really terribly funny. After all, she was just doing what her mother wanted, going out with a nice boy her own age. It was a howl. She put her head down on his shoulder.

It was like pressing the button that put up the top of his car. Things began to happen. Her mother had asked, "When are you going to grow up, Audrey?" Wouldn't she have been surprised to know?

It was kind of nice, she felt powerless against him, will-less. Then suddenly she pushed him away. They looked at each other. "Well, well, well," he said. "Aren't we the little spitfire?" He sounded as though his feelings were hurt but he didn't want her to find out.

She didn't know the answer and for a moment there was the danger of silence. "Oh, not so much," she parried.

"Listen, lady," he said. "Where'd you get those inhibitions?"

"I don't have any inhibitions." She sat very straight. "After all, I hardly know you, really."

"You want to see my calling card?" He made as if to search through his coat pockets, laughing, but all the time she felt him watching her nervously.

Suddenly she snickered. "Please!" she said in a high suggestive voice she had never used before. "Not here!"

He gave her a quick, pleasantly surprised glance. But she had thrown him off his routine and it took him a moment to get back. "Why don't we get to know each other better?" he said finally, and again pulled her close.

My God, what does he think he's doing? she thought. Then for the first time in her life she became really conscious of her body, from her

neck down to her feet, as though she was a strange person inside herself; feeling her whole long white body as it sat on the cold sand. It was warm and rounded, a woman's body. That's what he pushed away, she thought. He just pushed it away. The damned fool!

She flung herself backward on the sand.

Afterwards, outside of the knowing, she didn't feel a bit different. It was funny. Only that sundae must have upset her stomach a little.

That boy called next night at dinner time. She kicked the dining room door closed so her folks couldn't hear, and told him she had to go out to sit with a child. "No, I said I'd come for sure. I have to go. Really." He offered to pick her up after and drive her home, but she said she didn't know when she'd be leaving. "I could wait," he said, and suddenly she wanted to scream at him. "No, no, no, no!" she screamed but quietly so they wouldn't hear through the door.

Going to the Sermans' was a real pleasure, a real deep pleasure. Now she could look him right in the eye. She was even with him now, she knew all he knew. And he didn't even know she knew it. All the time she was saying hello and goodbye she was laughing at him inside. The damned fool!

All evening she roamed through the house, looking contemptuously at the furniture, and laughing to herself. The joke was on him, all right.

She was still laughing as she went out the door with him. But when they came to the front steps he reached out and took her arm, lightly above the elbow. She could feel his fingers through her coat sleeve. All the laughter went, in that second it was as though she had touched a snake. She wrenched her arm away and ran down the steps. Halfway down the walk she turned. "You don't have to take me," she said. "I forgot." There was something wrong with her voice, it came out all funny.

He looked surprised and started toward her and she ran down to the sidewalk. He stopped again. "How are you going, Audrey?"

She called back from the sidewalk in that funny voice. "Someone's picking me up. I mean, I'm meeting them. I can't go with you. I forgot."

When she reached the boulevard she sat down on a bench to wait for the bus. No one was around. She just sat and waited. She was perfectly all right. It was just him touching her and she would just see that he never touched her again. That was all.

Suddenly the street lights dimmed and went out, all except a single lamp every two blocks. Then she realized it was too late, the bus had stopped running. I have to walk, she thought, and she got to her feet.

After a few blocks there was nothing but wide empty lots, black where the weeds had been burned off. There were big billboards in some of them. Everything was still. Down a side street a night bird called four times. But it was all right, she was on her way home. Then a big car went by, fast, and when it was gone she seemed to be just crawling along, the car's speed had slowed her down. It would take her forever to reach the next corner.

She went on walking. She was so small, such a little bit of stuff in the enormous night. She knew there were houses on either side of the boulevard, but she couldn't feel they were really there, she couldn't see lights, she couldn't hear voices. The tapping of her heels on the pavement was the only sound. And all of a sudden, as in a musical picture where you suddenly realized that the chorus was all around, she knew there was life around her in the dark places, behind the trees and billboards, in the big black pools of shadow. She could feel it. The men you read about in the papers, that robbed women, or worse. She could feel them waiting. And as she saw them in her mind, crouching, listening to her heels on the pavement, they all had Mr. Serman's twisted face.

All she could think to do was to go on walking. She kept her eyes straight ahead. As long as she didn't see them she was all right.

Far behind her she heard a car; its headlights shone up to her and then beyond. She took a deep breath, when the headlights lit the street she knew there was no one there, it was all imagination. But as the car drew closer she heard the motor drop in key. The man was slowing up for her. The man in the car with Mr. Serman's face. She began to run. At the corner she turned into the side street.

She was all lightness, all speed, she had a hundred million horsepower in her legs. He turned in behind her, she saw her shadow black on the sidewalk. Then suddenly there was a red glow where the lights caught the reflector on the trunk of a big tree growing out into the gutter. She ran around to the far side of the tree and, with her magazine in her mouth, climbed up, as high as she could go.

The car passed beneath her. In the next block it stopped and she could hear the garage door and then a dog barked twice and was silent. It's just someone going home, she thought. Now I'll get down. I'll go home. It's silly to stay here. I can't sit up in a tree all night, she thought. People would laugh. It's silly.

When the darkness around her began to take the form of leaves and branches she climbed down. A rooster was crowing, harshly, nearby. Her arms and legs were numb and her cheek was raw where she had held it against the trunk all night. She walked home.

The front room was full of people and the lights were still on. Everyone turned quickly to look at her, and her mother said her name. "Oh, Audrey . . ." she said. Audrey walked right through to her room and got into bed and pulled the covers up over her face.

It was two in the afternoon before her mother could finally get her to talk. She said a lot of men had pulled her into a car and driven away with her. When her mother asked her if they had done . . . anything, she began to cry, quietly, without stopping. Her mother pulled the covers over her again and went outside for a minute. When she came back Audrey was still crying. She cried for more than an hour.

It was in the papers for two days.

# HARRY SLOCHOWER:

## *Goethe and Rilke: Contemporary Revaluations*

"Time is a gift of God"—Goethe
"Time is my deepest sorrow"—Rilke

### I

Reconsideration of Goethe's *Faust* appears relevant today when, in Spengler's forecast, "Faustian culture" has turned in the direction of a Caesaristic power mania, and when Nazi theoreticians would interpret the work as part of their Nordic source philosophy. But such claims are a kind of inverted book burning which slander the great German and European. Unfortunately, the exegeses which *Faust* has received at the hands of most English critics have not served to underscore its humanistic motif. Following Emerson and Santayana, *Faust* has been generally viewed as a philosophy of temporal pragmatism, celebrating demonic wilfulness which disports itself in ceaseless and wayward transcendence. Emerson castigated the poem as "a painful . . . destructive . . . most disagreeable" book. Santayana saw it as part of the egoistic tradition in German philosophy, and Mark Van Doren recently characterized it as a "romantic glorification of experience for its own sake." In English criticism, it is indeed, perhaps the least known of the great classics. Although there are about forty-five translations of the first part and some sixteen of the second, the work has remained "a book of seven seals" to the general English reading public. There are two main reasons for this situation.

*Faust* is a work in which philosophy and poetry are more intimately interwoven than in any other philosophical poem. And its translators (with the exception of Shelley, who limited himself to a few passages) have been neither philosophers nor poets. (In this respect, the Germans have been more fortunate in possessing the Schlegel-Tieck version of Shakespeare.) They have brought cultural piety and philological devotion to their subject. But little else. Bayard Taylor's translation has long been considered standard. But passages, crucial for the philosophical import of the work, are plainly mistranslated, and where Goethe's rhythm and imagery are natural and inspired, Taylor's are rhetorically verbose. Part of Taylor's difficulty stems from his attempt to render the feminine and dactylic rhymes of the German, an almost impossible task in English. Where translators have sacrificed the German rhymes and have tried to give a colloquial rendition, the result is simply flat.

The present offering by MacIntyre (illustrated by Rockwell Kent)

"sets out to create a modern 'Americanized' version" of *Faust*, Part I.[1] MacIntyre does not try to reproduce Goethe's doggerel or his exact rhythms and double-rhymes. His language is simple, unstilted semi-prose, and on the whole reads smoother than other attempts of this sort. It is best in those passages (such as Prologue at the Theatre, Auerbach's Cellar, the Gretchen scenes, and particularly Faust's religious exposition to Gretchen) where Goethe's own language is very near prose. It is also a pleasure to record that the decisive lines of the wager ("Wie ich beharre bin ich Knecht . . ."), upon which much of the poem's theme depends, mistranslated by Taylor, Latham, Raphael, and others, are well and accurately given by MacIntyre. For the rest, it must be set down that the translation is just not poetry. Aside from this, its main defect lies in that it "pragmatizes" many passages which, in the original, have a more purely emotional and philosophic import.[2] More than any other philosophical poem, the

1. *Goethe's Faust*. A New American Translation by Carlyle F. MacIntyre, with Illustrations by Rockwell Kent. Together with the German Text. New Directions.

2. It is perhaps ungracious to point out isolated deficiencies in a difficult project which has been obviously conceived and executed with warmth and industry. But it might prove of some service to enumerate types of translation which appear questionable to us:

A. *Pragmatizations*:

"Mighty fabrications" for "hohe Werke" (p. 5) and "the fabric of the world" for "was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält" (p. 15) do not convey the emotional philosophical passion of the original.

"Old Boy" for "Alten" (p. 11). Even for Mephisto, "Old Boy" seems an over-facetious designation of the Lord.

"Promotions" for "Ehr'" (p. 15) is not in keeping with Faust's spiritual mood.

"That's a delicious child" for "dieses Kind ist schön"—Faust referring to Gretchen (p. 205). "Kind" is used in the sense of "Baby." 'Delicious" seems altogether unwarranted even for a sensuous Faust. "This baby is pretty" approximates but does not give the lovable quality of the original.

"The aged drunkard" for "der alte Zecher" (p. 221) negates the poem's reverent treatment of the King in Thule, whose act in the Gretchen drama represents devotion and faithfulness.

"This wandering in the wasteland" for "dieser Wandel in der Öde" (p. 279). Since Faust is here speaking of the value which romantic isolation ("wilderness") has for him, "Öde" is hardly a wasteland to him.

"Oh wait! / I want to stay here, just with you!" for "O weile! / Weil' ich doch so gern, wo du weilest" (p. 283)—Gretchen to Faust in the dungeon scene. This is a good illustration of Goethe's "naive" poetic power, difficult to translate.

B. *Additions or changes suggesting misleading interpretations*:

"All shall be as you wish" for "es sei dir überlassen" and "Do as you will. I give you a free hand" for "Du darfst auch da nur frei erscheinen" (pp. 9, 11). These words, spoken by the Lord to Mephisto, allow the devil more freedom than is granted him in the original.

"To all that wavers you must minister, / basing it firmly in enduring thoughts" for "Und was in schwankender Erscheinung schwebt / Befestiget mit dauernden Gedanken" (p. 11). In Goethe's lines there is no "must minister," but rather the opposite.

Wagner's ". . . but I'd like to be omniscient" for ". . . doch möcht ich alles wissen" (p. 33). Wagner's atomic scholarship seeks to gather all "the facts," not omniscience.

"A vagabond scholar" for "Ein fahrender Scholast" (p. 89). Goethe's reference is to the travelling scholars of the Middle Ages.

"In sloughs of lechery" for 'in den Tiefen der Sinnlichkeit" (p. 121) makes Faust's desire for sensuous experience Mephistophelian in character.

"See how they lap it and like it!" for "Das Volk ist frei, seht an . . ." (p. 167) does not give the line at all. Goethe's use of "frei" is important in suggesting the illusory freedom gained in drunkenness.

"Just grasp the entire life of man" for "Greift nur hinein ins volle Menschenleben" (p. 411),

form of Goethe's *Faust* determines its meaning. Its philosophy is imaginative insight and passionate contemplation. It is the imagery which lends wings to its conceptual perspective. Analyzed simply for their forensic "meaning," passages lose their characteristic nuances and overtones, that is, the *suggestiveness* of their poetic magic.[3]

Another reason why *Faust* is relatively unknown or misunderstood is that most translations and interpretations have been confined to the first part. As we shall try to show, it is Part II which gives the synoptic view of the poem. To judge *Faust* by the first part alone is like judging Dante by the *Inferno* or Mann's Joseph story by *Joseph and His Brothers*. Exclusive attention to Part I has contributed towards regarding the work as expressive of extreme, romantic individualism, and of pragmatic striving for mere experience. Spengler's expressionistic deployment of the "Faustian soul" has further helped to popularize this notion. Approached from this angle, Goethe's poem may, indeed, seem a philosophic-symbolic foreshadowing of a power cult culminating in the imperialistic expansionism of Fascism. As, in the intention of the publishers, the MacIntyre translation (to be followed by Part II) is to show "the humane and cultured Germany that Hitler is trying to destroy," it might be well to discuss *Faust* briefly as pointing to *the limitations* of a power philosophy.

*Faust* is unique in that, unlike any other classics, it is the product of the author's entire life. More precisely, it is the summation of some sixty-three years' labor by a man whose life-span encompassed three generations, and whose interests were admittedly catholic. It has come to stand as one of mankind's great myths, along with Prometheus, Parsifal, and Tristan. It is doubtless the profoundest work in all German literature, where it has served as model and inspiration from Wagner's Siegfried to Mann's *Magic Mountain* and Joseph story, which directly point back to it

spoken by the Jester, sounds Faustian.

C. *Miscellaneous*

"With thunder-crash about their ears" for "mit Donnergang" (p. 3). The "ears" seem to have been brought in to rhyme with "brother-spheres."

"Matter . . . substance . . . solids . . . light and the world-stuff" for Körper" (p. 91). Where Goethe achieves powerful effect by repetition of the word "Körper," the translation dissipates the effect by using four different terms.

Valentin's "an honest soldier" for "als Soldat und brav" (p. 327) is better than Taylor's "a soldier brave" or Lowe-Porter's use of these words in translating Mann's "als Soldat und brav" in the chapter on Joachim's death in *The Magic Mountain*. The nearer meaning would seem to be "honorable."

The Prologue at the Theatre is placed in the Appendix, thus suggesting that it is a parenthetical scene of the first part. This is highly dubious. The Prologue at the Theatre appears rather as the nether or practical world juxtaposed to the Prologue in Heaven, as the high or ideal world,—*between* which the human drama of *Faust* proper moves.

One feature of the MacIntyre edition should be hailed, that of placing the German text alongside the translation. For those who have some knowledge of German, but not enough to follow the original, the translation will prove useful. With this help, one can go back to the original in a better position to appreciate the poetic lines.

3. Those who have tried to teach Faust in translation might back us up in recording that the experience is joyless. Points which, in the original, seem of passionate import, lose their relevance, as though the current had been cut off.

by analogous recurrences of scenes and situations.

The first part, however, is the product of *young* Goethe. As such, it voices German middle class revolt against the constrictions of mediaevalism. It marks the high point of Protestant individualism in German letters bursting through the feudal ice. Faust challenges the dualistic tradition of German *Kultur* with its hiatus between theory and practice, poetry and politics. Because of the backwardness of the German middle class, this challenge had been disallowed even where no attempt was made to translate it into practice. (The Faust of the Protestant chapbooks was therefore condemned.) By the time of Lessing and Goethe, such heresies became possible—but only in the theoretical sphere. The symbolic rebelliousness of Goethe's *Faust* is more radical than that of the corresponding Hamlets and Macbeths precisely because of his greater restrictions in actual life. The first part is a storm and stress attack on collective norms, calling for the deed and self-development.

But even here Goethe indicates his *reservations* through the character of Mephistopheles. *Mephisto is Goethe's criticism of the Faustian upsurge.* He is no mediaeval devil, but appears in the Prologue in Heaven as part of the Lord's world. His role is not merely to act as a gadfly to man's tendency towards sluggishness; he is also the other "soul" of Faust-Goethe, the ironic principle constantly questioning Faust's stormy way. In the deaths of Gretchen and her mother, we have further indications of the *tragic* dilemma involved in Faust's power drive.

It should be noted that Goethe calls his work a "Tragedy." The conditions which make for the tragedy are made clear in Part Two. They are the social determinants and mores which hamper Faust and make it impossible for him to save Gretchen. Goethe came to know these forces in the years which lie between the first and second parts, when he served as a court official in Weimar, and experienced the crystallization of the White Terror. Where the younger Faust depended on himself, he must now employ public means—the court, the emperor, war, technics, menials—all of which may be subsumed under the heading of Mephistopheles, "the devil." Part I called for the end; Part II states the means. And the means not only slow up Faust's wish-fulfillment; they flatten and restrict his pursuits. Finding the temporal-social pattern wanting, Goethe sends his Faust to the Hellenic world in quest of timeless categories. But there is no "way," no path which tradition and history have marked out by which Faust might reach First Principles. And Goethe is now more clearly aware of the limitations attending theoretic short cuts. Faust's "quick" union with Helen has no real consequences, and Euphorion, the symbolic product, vanishes in air. Wagner's similar attempt to create life by laboratory means also fails, and Homunculus, his laboratory product, must go back to "the Mothers" of the ocean to develop by slow, organic steps. In the Helena and Homunculus acts, Goethe shows the futility of impatient "vulcanic" methods. Following the Helena act, Faust himself turns towards the sea, and the vision which now arises is that of setting bounds

to its aimless force, to utilize its energy for social ends. Faust has moved from romantic individualism to pragmatic sociality.

The clue to Goethe's rounded philosophy is not reached, however, until the final act. It is the most mythical and symbolic of Goethe's writings, compressing his hope as well as fear of the development of Western man. It is in this act that the labor of regaining land from the sea has begun. And it is here that Faust envisages "a paradisial land," on which "a free people" will live "on free soil." But the work engaged in is *industrialization,* and the means used are the "trinity" of "war, commerce and piracy." There is an ambiguity between Faust's building of canals and his agrarian vision, an ambiguity between his ideal social objective and the fact that Mephisto becomes the "overseer" of Faust's project. It is the ambiguity between Goethe's affirmation of modern progress and his questioning of it. This questioning assumes a runic tone in the Philemon-Baucis scenes. Philemon and Baucis are the "old-fashioned" past. Yet, Faust envies them the idyllic peace they enjoy, and amidst his modernistic, noisy venture, he feels the need of their humble cottage, chapel, and hillock, as a place where he might "rest" from his labors. While Goethe saw the necessity of going beyond the confinements of the agrarian past, he was against "the burning of the books," and felt that simple rejection of the older tradition entailed sacrificing an aspect of culture. But Faust must use Mephisto to carry out his wishes, and the old couple, instead of being removed, are burned to death.

Despite the fact that Faust's aspirations were "good," Goethe could not save Faust by virtue of his temporal striving alone. To *act,* Faust has to employ "practical," Mephistophelian means. Transposed into the social pattern of this time (1831), these means meant the authority of the Metternich regime, which was doing its utmost to undermine the Faustian wish. To make it nonetheless possible for Faust to enunciate his Utopian sociality, Goethe has recourse to a poetic hoax. Faust is outwardly blinded and mistakes the noise made by the lemures who are digging his grave for that of spades working on his project. Faust dies and only Mephisto remains to "organize" his vision. This point has been overlooked by those who argue that Faust is saved by his ceaseless efforts alone. To be sure, the famous lines, "Whoever aspires unweariedly, him we can redeem," inevitably quoted in support of this interpretation, do contribute to Faust's Protestant salvation. But it should be noted that the angels say "can," not "shall," and that these lines are followed by: "And if, in addition, he is granted Love from on High, the blessed host shall welcome him graciously." That is, Faust needs grace along with works. Goethe does not rest content with either Faust's individualistic imperatives or with the social determinants which he used and by which he was used. At the end, Goethe turns to a spherical pattern which culminates in the Catholic setting of Faust's Assumption. This shift from the linear to the recurrent is borne out by the whole fifth act with its mythical allusions to the Trinity. There is an Orphic quality to this act which repudiates, or at

east sets bounds to, the sense of time and the power-cult. At the very close, Gretchen reappears, and the circle closes on the Faustian pattern.[4] The ending unites the collectivity of Catholicism with that of Utopian Socialism which bore a Christian character.

In Goethe, as in Shakespeare, the power drive appears as tragic delusion. The "tragedy" in *Faust* is on a threefold plane: It is the tragedy of Goethe's own failure to counteract the *Kultur*-notion of his day by urging interaction between art and "the folk," at a time when the German middle class was bowed down in subservience. It is the tragedy of any ideal program translated into specific action, involving chance, bureaucracy, and error. ("Man errs as long as he strives.") Finally, it is the tragedy of the power drive which even when buoyed up by noble motives involves sacrificing others (in Faust's history, the deaths of Gretchen and her mother, the parricidal act in the Philemon-Baucis scene). Extended to social ventures, it may lead to Caesaristic expansionism. Still, even as Goethe is disquieted by the forces he has set loose, he does not altogether repudiate them. The poem begins with a Heaven ruled by a Protestant God, and a Protestant note remains even in the final scene in such characters as Pater Seraphicus and in "the eternal feminine leading us on" of the Chorus Mysticus. Perhaps the whole can be characterized as a Protestantism which feels the need of a Catholic framework, a kind of Catholic Protestantism.

In Faust-Mephisto, Goethe gave mythical form to the most promising and most threatening in the development of Western Man. They point to the coexisting elements of liberty and license. It is such coexistence which appears in the "translations" of the conquests of Wagner's Siegfried into those of the Bismarckian empire, and of Nietzsche's transvaluations into the nihilism of Nazi destructiveness. But it would be a grievous historical injustice to range Goethe's Faust with present-day imperialistic strivings. Faust stands at the beginning of middle class efforts to free itself from a frozen collectivity; Hitlerism is the last effort to enclose mankind in an iron Panzer ring. Faust called for more space for a liberated humanity; Hitlerism would conquer more land to enslave more of humanity. However tragic Faust's temporal efforts were, Goethe saves him "Platonically" for the day when "practical" conditions will be more favorable for the transposition of his "soul's" creative restlessness into the humane objective of "a free people on free soil."

## II

In recent years, Rainer Maria Rilke has been singled out among modern German poets for translation and criticism. The translators have done better than the critics, although Rilke's form is no less difficult to reproduce than his mystical thought. Rilke is one of the "purest" of

4. The significance of Gretchen's reappearance seems to be overlooked by Santayana, who criticizes Faust's way as romantic adventurism. It is, Santayana writes, as if Dante had passed from "donna gentile" to "donna gentile."

lyricists. Long, flowing lines are welded into a unity of rhythm, tone mood, and rhyme which intoxicates the sense. Rilke is among the grea masters in his sensitive manipulation of the German language. His rhyme are so "natural" that one is hardly aware of them. It is as though th lines were "waiting" to be completed by the rhyme. This lends an extra ordinary musical quality to his verse. A magical spell is produced tha dissolves the subject matter, gently lowering it to a subordinate plane Rilke's poetry achieves this incantational effect despite the fact that it i concerned with *things,* with the many homely objects which characterize modern civilization. Especially his later poetry is fond of technical an archaic terms. Rilke's homage to things is, however, not in the interest of naturalistic identification. For Rilke things are similes and metaphors symbolic carriers of elemental forces. No object is ever equated with another, but is always "like" something. (Rilke's most frequently used word is *wie.*) His impressionistic realism is in the service of expressionistic summation.

The nuclear position of form, particularly of rhyme, in Rilke's lyric places an extraordinary burden on English versions where these rhyme are hard to match. And there are other problems for the translator Rilke's frequent use of the indefinite pronoun, his relative and participia clauses which often omit the verb, his unusual choice of words with "fluid" meanings. Considering these tasks, Babette Deutsch's renditions from th *Book of Hours* are among the most successful we have come across.[5] He fourteen poems, chosen from the first two sections of the book, are discriminately selected, and, on the whole, have caught the poet's mood. It would have been well if some poems from the third section had been included. For it is here that Rilke writes of poverty and death, a them which later works (the *Notebooks, Malte, Requiem,* and some of th *Elegies*) develop along other planes.

The Rilke renascence of our day coincides with the Kafka vogue. Thi is no accident. Although Rilke, the Catholic, did not experience the sam exile as did Kafka, the Jew, in their common Czechoslovakian birthplace

5. *Poems from the Book of Hours* by Rainer Maria Rilke. Translated by Babett Deutsch. New Directions.

6. Exception might be taken to the version in the poems beginning "Die Könige de Welt sind alt . . ." and "Alles wird wieder gross sein und gewaltig . . ." In the first "De Pöbel bricht sie klein zu Geld, / der zeitgemässe Herr der Welt" is translated as "The mo breaks these to bits of gold / that the world's master, shrewd and bold." For Rilke, "Gold" stands in contrast to "Geld" (money), gold representing qualitative value as against th atomic nature of money. Compare, *inter alia,* "Dann sah ich auch Paläste, welche leben (*Book of Hours,* part III) and the poem 'Du bist der Arme, du der Mittellose" (part III where God is called "the eternal metamorphosis of gold into the sunlight." "Zeitgemäss (filled out by "shrewd and bold") is important for Rilke's castigation of temporal opportunism

In the other poem, "Kein Jenseitswarten und kein Schaun nach drüben, / nur Sehnsucht auch den Tod nicht zu entweihn" is rendered as "No waiting the beyond, no peering towar it, / but longing to degrade not even death." The translation, "not even death," does no convey Rilke's characteristic *apotheosis* of death, as the highest value.

A minor quarrel: "Wunderliche Stadt der Zeit" is given as "time's marvellous city" (p. 7 Rilke's persistent denigration of both the city and time makes "marvellous" quite un-Rilkea The sense is "queer" or "fantastic."

Two misprints in the German text: "braucht" instead of "brauchst" (p. 4) and "niesig instead of "riesig" (p. 24).

both felt themselves estranged from their fathers, and both extended their sense of alienation to the modern world as a whole. Their work is permeated by a mood of aloneness in a world ruled by the determination of money, machines, and the market place. Their art is an expressionistic reaction to outer burdens. But they differ from the expressionistic writers in that their art attempts to track down the elusive enemy by *a precise and exact* determination of naturalistic phenomena. Where most expressionists rest content with depicting the mystical essences of things in general, Rilke and Kafka follow each thing and event in an effort to describe its mystery accurately. In the end, both admit the futility of their quest, and man's finitude appears as guilt. Finally, Rilke and Kafka meet in that, for both, man's very limitation becomes the source of his salvation. That is, man is saved *by virtue* of his guilt.

Rilke, along with Richard Dehmel and Stefan George, was among those who captured the imagination of Germany's youth in our time. Dehmel's dynamic naturalism spoke more for pre-war Germany, while George and Rilke became the symbols of the two poles between which post-war Germany swung. George's stately, aristocratic verses inveighed against the flabby naturalism of the age. Approximating a position which the Humanists occupied in our country, George's assumed role of leader and director attracted those who felt general discontent with what they considered the spinelessness of the democratic way. Rilke's poetry, on the other hand, was a democratic identification with the ordinary things of existence. It was dedicated to "the unpretentious words which live in the commonplace world." If George called to the would-be challengers and heroes, Rilke spoke for those whose dissatisfaction took a "waiting" form. He became the chanter for that group in the German middle class which bore patiently, yet sought for *justification and sanction* for its passivity.

George found his models in the tradition of aristocratic Hellenism. Rilke found them in Tolstoy's Russia, which gave him a "fourth dimension of existence." The *Book of Hours,* written around the turn of the century, stands under the immediate impact of his Russian experience. It bears the mark of Tolstoy's pantheistic piety, his aversion to modernism, and something of his animal concreteness. Like Tolstoy, Rilke is haunted by a consummate fear of death. If the first section is animated by the feeling that man is somehow God's "neighbor," the second begins to doubt this relation, and in the third section, doubt gives way to resignation. This last part takes greater cognizance of the difficulties in the way. It underscores the evils of modernism, concretized in the great cities which are without comfort, where children are alone and the women wither, and where men live in pale slavery to heavy aims. The whole poem has been characterized as a lyrical hymn to God. But who is this God to whom Rilke addresses himself?

Paradoxical as it may seem, in Rilke's pious verses God appears as the negation of being and as the creative artist who fully succeeds in representing such negation. That Rilke's God is the negation of modern

existence is obvious enough. Rilke's God is offended by the philosophy of time as progress, by the loud heroics and aggrandizements of modern life. A positive norm seems to be contained in Rilke's conception of God as the perfect act or form. But, for Rilke, perfection is associated with the silence and darkness of non-being. It is the fully complete state about which there is nothing to be done or said. And the high goal of all being is to fulfill itself in Non-Being. This is the meaning of *Rilke's identification of God with Death.* If, for Schopenhauer, death was the muse of philosophy, for Rilke, God is the "death-producer" (Tod-Gebärer").

However, the apotheosis of death in the *Book of Hours* was written under the aegis of two dynamic personalities, Tolstoy and Rodin, who were also great artists. The time spent in the artist colony of Worpswede further kindled Rilke's own artistic aspirations. Rodin's personality, in particular, overwhelmed Rilke, dominating the God-Death of the *Book of Hours.* Rilke marries one of Rodin's pupils, and later becomes his secretary. But by 1906 both men have tired of each other. And it is only now, after his severance from the master, that Rilke feels able to write again. Further stimulated by an exhibition of Cezanne, Rilke's art strives to emulate the physical and visible character of sculpture and painting. His poetry begins to take on a less feverish tone, and the monk from the *Book of Hours* is replaced by the artist. From being secretary to the Rodin-God, Rilke becomes "secretary" to the Art-God.

This provides us with a further clue to Rilke's God-conception. It is *Rilke's identification, as man and artist, with the godly.* The elements of fear, want, limitation, and loneliness which placed Rilke at a disadvantage in his relation to the raucous, possessive world in which he lived, are *redeemed* by his equating them with God's own qualities. And in that Rilke, as poet, graces these qualities, he becomes indispensable to God's existence. The most direct expression of this may be seen in the famous lines:

> What will you do, God, when I die?
> When I, your pitcher, shattered lie?
> When I, your drink, go stale and dry?
> I am your garb, the trade you ply,
> you lose your meaning, losing me.

Rilke's "neighborly" relation to God also appears in his insistence that there is no need for *a mediator* between man and God. But Rilke deviates from traditional mysticism in what, at first, seems an amazing contention, namely that the greatness of God *precludes* his being a Father. The Father, argues the *Book of Hours,* stands for that which is gone, for outmoded gesture, dead custom, and ashen hair. No, Rilke writes, God is *the Son,* that is, the future and the heritage. God is the created, not the creator. If God is the Son beloved by poet, who then is the Father? Rilke replies directly: "I am the Father." Here Rilke would be the Father who through his poetic recreations creates God, the Son. Later Rilke tends to take over the characteristic of the Son as well. An examination of Rilke's

sea-simile is revealing. In the passage where Rilke speaks of God as the Son, he likens Him to the sea.[7] But in the later *Sonnet to Orpheus,* he speaks of himself as the sea, and "many a wind" now becomes his Son. Rilke has now identified himself with a kind of Trinity—Father, Son, and "many a wind."

Rilke's God inverts Goethe's Faust. Where Faust goes out to win the objects of the world, and by winning them to raise himself with them towards *a richer, all-embracing Absolute,* Rilke softly approaches things only to capitulate before them, to lower them and himself down to the passive and dark silence of absolute non-Being. Despite the elder Goethe's reservations towards temporal progress, he held that, properly employed, time was "a gift of God." Rilke's poetry would celebrate the running down of Faustian time, would stamp limitation as the unlimited value. In this sense, Rilke's democratic piety becomes a form of aristocratic pride. His humble offer to serve as "the bee of the Invisible" is an inversion of his heroic acceptance to the level of the divine. If, as Feuerbach argued, past religions attributed to God those qualities which man lacked, Rilke identifies God with his own deficiencies. Unable to withstand the pressures of historical time, Rilke passed towards the deification of all those victimized by it.

Yet, Rilke did not gain the peace of acceptance which is associated with mediaeval mystics and with Spinoza, to whom he has been likened. At times, something of social impatience makes itself felt, as in the *Book of Hours,* where Rilke speaks of the rested hands of the poor which will some day rise, when the hands of all classes and people will have become tired. His very invocations of "silent" values, endlessly repeated, betrays doubts of these values. The nervous restlessness of Rilke's piety points to the intrusion of the very modernistic powers which he would reverse. Rilke's approach to God is less a wooing than a passionate wrestling to possess him and mold him to his own image. Goethe, brought up as a Protestant, moved towards Catholic collectivism. Rilke, brought up as a Catholic, continuously breaks the frame of his passivity by "protesting" notes. The dramatic element in Rilke (as in Kafka) derives from his midway position between faith and doubt. His greatness lies in his having turned the tentativeness and indecision of little things into metaphors which suggest their own transcendence.

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7. Einzige Welle, deren
allmähliches Meer ich bin; . . .
Wie viele von diesen Stellen der Räume waren schon
innen in mir. Manche Winde
sind wie mein Sohn.
(From the sonnet, "Atmen, du unsichtbares Gedicht!")

# EUDORA WELTY:

## *Ida M'Toy*

For one human being to point out another as "unforgettable" seems a trifle condescending, and in the ideal world we would all keep well aware of each other, but there are nevertheless a few persons one meets who are as inescapable of notice as skyrockets, it may be because like skyrockets they are radiant with their own substance and shower it about regardlessly. Ida M'Toy, an old negro woman, for a long time a midwife in my little Mississippi town and for another long time a dealer in second-hand clothes in the same place, has been a skyrocket as far back as most people remember. Or, rather, she is a kind of meteor (for she is not ephemeral, only sudden and startling). Her ways seem on a path of their own without regard to any course of ours and of a somewhat wider circuit; she will probably leave a glow behind and return in the far future on some other lap of her careening through all our duller and steadier bodies. She herself deals with the rest of us in this mighty and spacious way, calling in allegories and the elements, so it is owing to her nature that I may speak a little grandly.

The slave traders of England and New England, when they went capturing, took away the most royal of Africans along with their own slaves, and I have not much doubt that Ida has come down from a race of tall black queens. I wish I might have seen her when she was young. She has sharp clever features, light-filled black eyes, arched nostrils, and fine thin mobile lips, and her hair, gray now, springs like a wild kind of diadem from the widow's peak over her forehead. Her voice is indescribable but it is a constant part of her presence and is filled with invocation. She never speaks lightly of any person or thing, but she flings out her arm and points at something and begins, "O, precious, I'm telling you to look at that—*look* at it!" and then she invokes about it, and tolerates no interruptions. I have heard long chants and utterances on the origin and history and destination of the smallest thing, any article or object her eye lights on; a bit of candle stuck on the mantlepiece will set her off, as if its little fire had ignited her whole mind. She invokes what she wishes to invoke and she has in all ways something of the seer about her. She wields a control over great numbers of her race by this power which has an integrity that I believe nothing could break, and which sets her up, aloof and triumphant, above the rest. She is inspired and they are not. Maybe off by themselves they could be inspired, but nobody else could be inspired in the same room with Ida, it would be too crowded.

Ida is not a poor old woman, she is a rich old woman. She accepts it that she is held in envy as well as respect, but it is only another kind of tribute as far as she is concerned, and she is not at all prouder of being

rich or of having been married in the home of a white lady, "in her bay window," than she is of being very wise. She expects to be gaped at, but she is not vain.

Ida's life has been divided in two (it is, in many ways, eloquent of duality) ; but there is a thread that runs from one part into the other, and to trace this connection between delivering the child and clothing the man is an interesting speculation. Moreover, it has some excuse, for Ida herself helps it along by a wild and curious kind of talk that sashays from one part to the other and sounds to some of her customers like "ranting and raving." It is my belief that if Ida had not been a midwife she would not be the same kind of second-hand clothes dealer she is. Midwifery set her off, it gave her a hand in the mysteries, and she will never let go that flying hold merely because she is engaged in something else. An ex-alchemist would run a second-hand clothes business with extra touches—a reminiscence of glitter would cling to the garments he sold, and it is the same with Ida. So it is well when you meet her to think what she was once.

Ida's memory goes back to her beginnings, when she was, she says, the first practical nurse in Jackson at the age of twenty-one, and she makes the past sound very dark and far back. She thanks God, she says, that today Capitol Street is not just three planks to walk on and is the prettiest place on earth, but that "people white and black is too high and don't they know Ida seen them when they carried a little tin coal-oil lamp that wasn't any bigger than their little fingers?" Ida speaks of herself in the third person and in indirect discourse often and especially when she says something good of herself or something of herself long ago. She will intone, "Ida say that she was good to the poor white people as she was to the rich, as she made a bargain to nurse a poor white lady in obstetrical case for a peck of peas. Ida said no, she couldn't see her suffer, and therefore a peck of blackeyed peas would be sufficient." She wants all she says to be listened to with the whole attention, and declares she does wish it were all written down. "Let her keep it straight, darling, if she remember Ida's true words, the angels will know it and be waiting around the throne for her." But Ida's true words are many and strange. When she talks about the old days it is almost like a story of combat against evil. "Ida fitted a duel from twenty-one to fifty-six, and then they operated on her right side and she was never able to stoop down to the floor again. She was never like those young devils, that pace around in those white shoes and those white clothes and up and down the streets of an evening while their patient is calling for a drink of water down poor parched throat—though I wore those white shoes and those white clothes. Only, my heart was in another direction."

Ida said, "I was nursing ever since there was a big road in Jackson. There was only nine doctors, and they were the best in all the world, all nine, right here in Jackson, but they were weak in finance. There wasn't nary hospital nowhere—there wasn't nary brick in Jackson, not one brick,

no brick walk, no brick store, no brick nothing-else. There wasn't no Old Ladies' Home at the end of the street, there wasn't no stopping place bu the country. Town was as black as tar come night, and praise God they finally put some gas in bottles on the corners. There wasn't no such thing in the world as a nice buggy. Never heard tell of a cotton mattress, bu tore up shucks and see the bed, so high, and the hay pillow stand up s beautiful! Now they got all this electric light and other electricity. Can' do nothing without the clickety-click. And bless God they fly just lik buzzards up in the air, but Ida don't intend to ride till she ride to Glory."

In those early days when Jackson seems to have been a Slough o Despond with pestilence sticking out its head in the nights as black a tar, Ida was not only a midwife, she nursed all diseases. "It was th yellow fever first, and the next after that was the worst pox that there ever was in this world—it would kill you then, in my girl-days, six o seven a day. They had to stretch a rope across the road to keep the poo sick ones apart and many's the day I've et at the rope and carried th food back to the ones suffering." Ida remembers epidemics as major com bats in which she was a kind of giant-killer. She nursed through influenza "six at a blow, until the doctor told me if I didn't quit nursing by sixe I would drop dead in the room." She says the doctors wrote her a recom mendation as long as where she will show you up her arm, saying tha when they called, it never was too cold and it never was too hot for Ida to go, and that the whole town would bow and say Amen, from the Jews on "Bless my patients," she says, "nary one ever did die under my nursing though plenty were sick enough to die. But laugh here," she directs "My husband stayed sick on me twenty-one years and cost me one thousand whole dollars, but you can't nurse the heart to do no good, and in the nigh he fallen asleep and left me a widow, and I am a widow still."

When Ida found she could no longer stoop to the floor she stopped be ing a midwife and began selling clothes. She was successful at once in that too, for there is a natural flowering-ground for the second-hand clothes business in the small American community where the richest people are only a little richer than the poor people and the poorest have ways to save pride and not starve or go naked. In Jackson the most re spectable matron, if she would like a little extra cash to buy a new camellia bush or take the excursion to New Orleans, can run over to Ida's with her husband's other suit and Ida will sell it to a customer as a bargain at $5 and collect 25% for herself, and everybody except the husband ("Righ off my back! Perfectly good suit!") will be satisfied.

It could be a grubby enough little business in actual fact, but Ida is not a grubby person, and in her handling it has become an affair of imagination and, to my notion, an expression of a whole attitude of life as integrated as an art or a philosophy.

Ida's store is her house, a white-painted little house with a porch across the front, a picket-fence around, and the dooryard planted to ca pacity in big flowers. Inside, it is a phantasmagoria of garments. Every

room except the kitchen is hung with dresses or suits (the sexes are segregated) three and four times around the walls, for the turnover is large and unpredictable, though not always rapid—people have to save up or wait for cotton-money. She has assumed all the ceremonies of Business and employs its practices and its terms to a point within sight of madness. She puts on a show of logic and executive order before which the customer is supposed to quail; sometimes I think her customers take on worth with her merely as witnesses of the miracles of her workings, though that is unfair. Her house turns year by year into a better labyrinth, more inescapable, and she delights in its complication of aisles and curtains and its mystery of closed doors with little signs on ruled paper, "Nobody can come in here." Some day some little colored girl is going to get lost in Ida's house. The richer she gets, the more "departments" she builds and adds on to the house, and each one is named for the color of its walls, the pink department, or the blue. Even now her side yard is filled with miscellaneous doors, glass panes, planks, and little stacks of bricks that she is accumulating for a new green department she says she will build in 1943.

Her cupboards and drawers are a progressive series of hiding places, which is her interpretation of the filing system. She hides trinkets of mysterious importance or bits of paper filled with abbreviated information; she does not hide money, however, and she tells how much she has on hand ($660.60 is the latest figure), and her life insurance policy is nailed up on the wall over the mantel. Everybody knows her to be an old woman living with only a small grandchild to guard her in a house full of cash money, and yet she has not been murdered. She never will be. I have wondered what Ida would do if she saw a burglar coming after her money. I am convinced that she has no axe or gun ready for him, but a flow of words will be unstoppered that will put the fear of God in him for life; and I think the would-be burglars have the same suspicion, and will continue to keep away, not wanting so much fear of God as that.

She keeps as strict and full a ledger of transaction as the Book of Judgment, and in as enthusiastic and exalted a spirit of accuracy as an angel book-keeper should have. The only trouble is, it is almost impossible to find in it what she is looking for—but perhaps there will be confusion on Doomsday too. The book, a great black one, which she now has little William, her grandson, to hold for her while she consults it, (and he will kneel under it like a little mural figure) covers a period of 26 years, concerns hundreds of people, "white and black," and innumerable transactions, all noted down in a strange code full of flourishes, for Ida properly considers all she does confidential. "You could find anything in the world in this book," she says reverently, then slamming it shut in your face, "if you turn enough pages and go in the right direction. Nothing in here is wrong," she says. Loose slips are always flying out of the ledger like notes in the Sybil's book, and she sets William flying to chase them and get them inside again.

She writes her own descriptions of the garments brought to her to sell, and a lady giving over her finest white dress of last summer must not be surprised, if she looks over Ida's shoulder, to see her pen the words, "Rally Day, $2.00" or note down her best spring straw hat as "Tom Boy, 75c." The customer might be right, but Ida does not ever ask the customer. After a moment of concentration Ida goes and hangs the object for sale on the wall in the room of her choice, and a tag is pinned to the sleeve, saying simply, "Mrs. So-and-So." Accuracy is a passion with Ida, and so is her belief in her own conscience, and I do not know what it must have cost her to pin a tag on one poor sagging dress that has hung there year in, year out, saying "Don't know who this is."

She bears respect to clothes in the same degree as she bears it to the people from whose backs they come; she treats them like these people, until indeed it seems that dignity is in them, shapeless and even ridiculous as they have seemed at first; she gives them the space on the wall and the room in the house that correspond to the honor in which she holds the human beings, and she even speaks in the proper tone of voice when she is in the room with them. They hang at human height from the hangers on the walls, the brighter and more important ones in front and on top. With the most serene impartiality she makes up her mind about client and clothes, and she has been known to say, "For God's sake take it back. Wouldn't a man white or black wear that suit out of here."

There is a magnificence in Ida's business, an extent and an influence at which she hints without ceasing, that undoubtedly inspire the poorest or idlest customer with almost an anxiety to buy. It is almost like an appeasement, and the one that goes off with nothing must feel mean, foolish, and naked indeed, naked to scorn. "I clothe them," she says, "from Jackson to Vicksburg, Meridian to Jackson, Big Black to 'Azoo, Memphis to New Orleans—Clinton! Bolton! Edwards! Bovina! Pocahontas! Flora! Bentonia! 'Azoo City! Everywhere. There ain't nobody hasn't come to Ida, or sooner or later will come."

If no else had thought of the second-hand clothes business, Ida would have originated it, for she did originate it as far as she is concerned; and likewise I am forced to believe that if there had never been any midwives in the world Ida would have invented midwifery, so ingenious and delicate-handed and wise she is, and sure of her natural right to take charge. She loves transformation and bringing things about, she simply cannot resist it. The negro midwives of this state have a kind of organization these days and lesser powers, they do certain things in certain book-specified ways, and all memorize and sing at meetings a song about "First we put—Drops in their eyes," but in Ida's day a midwife was a lone person, invested with the whole charge of life; she had to draw upon her own resources and imagination. Ida's constant gestures today still involve a dramatic out-thrust of the right hand, and let any prominent names be mentioned (and she mentions them) and she will fling out her palm and cry into the conversation, "Born in this hand!" "Four hundred little white

babies,—or more," she says. "My God, I was bringing them all the time. I got 'em everywhere—doctors, lawyers, school teachers, and preachers, married ladies." She has been in the clothes business for twenty-six years, but she was a midwife for thirty-five.

She herself has been married, twice, and by her first husband she had one son, "the only one I ever did have and I want his name written down: Julius Knight." Her mother (before she died) and her brothers live out in the country, and only one little grandson has lived with her for a long time. Her husband, Braddie M'Toy, whom she called Toy, is remembered collecting and delivering clothes in a wagon when he was young, and was to be seen always on some street if not another, moving very slowly on account of his heart.

Now without Toy, Ida uses a telephone down the road and a kind of de luxe grapevine service to rouse up her clients and customers. Anybody who is asked to by Ida feels a duty to phone any stranger for her and "tell them for God's sake to come get their money and bring the change." Strange negroes call people at dawn, giving news of a sale, white ladies call unknown white ladies, notes on small rolls or scraps of paper folded like doctors' "powders" are conscientiously delivered, and the whole town contrives in her own spirit of emergency to keep Ida's messages on their way. Ida takes 25% of the sales price and if she sells your dress for a dollar you have to take her a quarter when you go, or come back another time, for she will not make change for anybody. She will not violate her system of book-keeping any more than she would violate her code of ethics or her belief in God—down to the smallest thing all is absolute in Ida's sight.

Whether it is due to a savage ancestry or a philosophical turn of mind, Ida finds all Ornament a wonderful and appropriate thing, the proper materializing of the rejoicing or sorrowing soul. I believe she holds Ornament next to birth and somehow kin to it. She despises a drab color and welcomes bright clothes with a queenly and triumphant smile, as if she acknowledges the bold brave heart that chose that. Inferior color means inferior spirit, and an inferior person should not hope to get or spend more than four-bits for an outfit. She dearly loves a dress that is at once identifiable as either rich mourning or "rally-day"—the symbolic and celebrating kind appeal to her inevitably over the warm or the serviceable, and she will ask and (by oratory) get the finest prices for rather useless but splendid garments. "Girl, you buy this spangle-dress," she says to a customer, and the girl buys it and puts it on and shines. Ida's scale of prices would make a graph showing precisely the rise from her condemnation of the subdued and nondescript to her acclaim of the bright and glorious. Her customers, poverty-bound little cooks and maids and cotton-choppers, go away feeling that they have turned into queens. Ida has put second-hand clothes on their backs and, with all the abrupt bullying of a busy fairy, wrapped them in some glowing raiment of illusion, set them in a whirl of bedazzlement; and they skitter out with shining eyes

and empty hands, with every hoarded penny spent. Ida has put them i inner spangles and she has taken an actual warm moist fifty-cent piec out of their palms, and in that world both items exchanged are precio above price, fifty cents being as miraculous as glory. With somethin second-hand, worn, yet finer than could ever be bought new, she brings t them a perfection in her own eyes and in theirs. She dresses them u and turns them with a little ceremonial jerk towards the mirror, and magic must hang over the green cracked glass, for (I have seen it happe a hundred times) the glances that go into its surface begin to shine wit a pride that could only be a kind of enchantment. It is nice on Saturday to pass in front of Ida's house on the edge of town and see the custome emerge. With some little flash of scarf, some extra glitter of trimmin for which they have paid dearly, dressed like some visions in Ida's specula tions on the world, glorious or menial as befits their birth, merit, and wi lingness, but all rampant and somehow fulfilled by this last touch of cos tume as though they have been tapped by a spirit when Ida's thimbl rapped them, they float dizzily down the steps and through the flower out the gate; and you could not help thinking of the phrase "going out int the world," as if Ida had just birthed them anew.

I used to think she must be, a little, the cross between a transcende talist and a witch, with the happiness and kind of self-wonder that thi combination must enjoy. They say that all things we write could be; an sometimes in amazement I wonder if a tiny spark of the wonderful Philos opher of Clothes, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, could be flashing for an in stant, and somewhat barbarically, in the wild and enthusiastic spirit o this old black woman. Her life like his is proudly emblematic—she hersel being the first to see her place in the world. It is she literally who clothe her entire world, as far and wide as she knows—a hard-worked midwif grown old, with a memory like a mill turning through it all the lives tha were born in her hand or have passed through her door.

When she stalks about, alternately clapping her hand over her fore head and flinging out her palm and muttering "Born in this hand!" a she is likely to do when some lady of the old days comes bringing a dres to sell, you can not help believing that she sees them all, her children an her customers, in the double way, naked and clothed, young and then old with love and with contempt, with open arms or with a push to bar th door. She is moody now, if she has not always been, and sees her customer as a procession of sweet supplicant spirits that she has birthed, who hav returned to her side, and again sometimes as a bunch of scarecrows o even changelings, that she wishes were well gone out of sight. "The would steal from their own mother," she says, and while she is pinnin up some purchase in a newspaper and the customer is still counting ou the pennies, she will shout in a deep voice to the grandchild that flutter around like a little blackbird, "Hold the door, William."

I have never caught Ida doing anything except selling clothes o holding forth on her meditations, but she has a fine garden. "If you wan

) carry me something I really like," she will say, bringing up the subject rst, "carry me dallion potatoes (dahlia bulbs) *first*, and old newspapers econd." Ida has the green finger from her mother, and she says, "You're ever going to see any flowers prettier than these right here." She adores iving flowers away; under your protest she will cut every one in the arden, every red and white rose on the trellis, which is a wooden sunset vith painted rays, the blossoms with little two-inch stems the way a child uts them, and distribute them among all present and those passing in the oad. She is full of all the wild humors and extravagances of the godlike oward this entire town and its environs. Sometimes, owing to her superior visdom, she is a little malign, but much oftener she will become excruci-tingly tender, holding, as if in some responsibility toward all the little nes of the world, the entire population to her great black cameoed breast. Then she will begin to call people "It." "It's all hot and tired, it is, coming o far to see Ida. Ah, take these beautiful flowers Ida grew with her own and, *that's* what it would like. Put 'em in its bedroom," and she presses orward all the flowers she has cut and then, not content, a bouquet drip-ing from a vase, one of a kind of everything, all into your arms.

She loves music too, and in her house she has one room, also hung vith clothes, called the music room. "I got all the music in the world n here," she used to say, jabbing a finger at a silent radio and an old ramophone shut up tight, "but what's the use of letting those contrivances un when you can make your own music?" And ignoring the humble cus-omers waiting she would fling down at the old pump-organ in the corner nd tear into a frenzy of chords. "I make my own!" she would shout into he turmoil. She would send for little William, with a voice like a little ird's, and he knew how to sing with her, though he would give out. "Bass, William!" she would shout, and in his tiny treble he sang bass, bravely.

When Ida speaks of her mother it is in a strange kind of pity, a tender mazement. She says she knew when her mother was going to die, and vith her deep feeling for events and commemorations, she gave her a fine ig party. Ida would no more shrink from doing anything the grand way han she would shrink from other demands upon her greatness. "Hush now," she told me, "don't say a word while I tell you this. All that day ong I was cooking dinner between niggers. I had: four turkeys, four ens, four geese, four hams, red cake, white cake, chocolate cake, caramel ake, every color cake known. The table reached from the front door to he ice box. I had all the lights burning up electricity, and all the flowers ut. I had the plates changed seven times, and three waiters from the hotel. I'd got Mama a partner. Mama was eighty years old and I got her another old lady eighty years old to march with. I had everybody come. All her children—one son, the big shot, came all the way from Detroit, riding in a train, to be at Mama's grand dinner. We had somebody play "Silent Night" and march music to follow later. And there was Mama: look at Mama! Mama loved powder. Mama had on a little old-fashioned hat, but she wouldn't take it off—had nice hair, too. Mama did all right

for the march, she marched all right, and sat down on time at the right place at the head of the table, but she wouldn't take off her hat. So the waiters, they served the chicken soup first, and Mama says, 'Where my coffee? Bring on turnip and cornbread. Didn't you make a blackberry pie?' I said, 'Mama, you don't eat coffee first.' But she said, 'Where my coffee? Bring on turnip and cornbread. Didn't you make a blackberry pie? What's the matter with you?' Everything was so fine, you know. It took her two big sons, one on each side, to quiet her, that's the way Mama acted!" And Ida ended the story laughing and crying. It was plain that there was one person who had no recognition of Ida's grandeur and high place in the world, and who had never yielded at all to the glamour as others did. It was a cruelty for Ida, but perhaps all vision has lived in the house with cruelty.

Nowadays, she is carried to such heights of business and power, and its paraphernalia crowds her so, that she is overcome with herself, and suddenly gives way to the magnitude of it all. A kind of chaos comes over her. Now and then she falls down in a trance and stays "dead as that chair for three days." White doctors love her and by a little struggle take care of her. Ida bears with them. "They took my appendix," she will say. "Well, they took my teeth." She says she has a paralyzed heel, though it is hard to see how she can tell—perhaps like Achilles she feels that her end is coming by entering that way. "The doctor told me I got to rest until 1945," she declares, with a lifted hand warding you off. "Rest! Rest! Rest! I must rest." If a step is heard on the front porch she instantly cries warning from within the house, "Don't set your heels down! When you speak to me, whisper!" When a lady that was a stranger came to see her, Ida appeared, but said in haste, "Don't tell me your name, for I'm resting my mind. The doctors don't want me to have any more people in my head than I got already." Now on Saturdays if a dusty battered car full of customers from across the cottonfields draws up, one by one all the shades in the house are yanked down. Ida wishes to see no one, she wishes to sell nothing.

Perhaps the truth is that she has expended herself to excess and now suffers with a corresponding emptiness that she does not want any one to see. She can show you the track of the pain it gives her: her finger crosses her two breasts. She is as hard to see as a queen.

And I think she lives today the way she would rather be living, directly in symbols. People are their vestures now. Memories, the great memories of births and marriages and deaths, are nearly the same as the pieces of jewelry ("$147.65 worth") she has bought on anniversary days and wears on her person. "That's Mama's death," she says—a silver watch on a silver chain. She holds out for your admiration the yellow hands that she asserts most of this country was born in, on which now seven signet rings flash. "Don't go to church any longer," she says—"or need to go. I just sit at home and enjoy my fingers."

# WALLACE STEVENS:

## *Desire & the Object*

It is curious that I should have spoken of Raël,
When it never existed, the order
That I desired. It could be —

Curious that I should have spoken of Jaffa
By her sexual name, saying that that high marriage
Could be, it could be.

I had not invented my own thoughts,
When I was sleeping, nor by day,
So that thinking was a madness, and is:

It was to be as mad as everyone was,
And is. Perhaps I had been moved
By feeling the like of thought in sleep,

So that feeling was a madness, and is.
Consider that I had asked
Was it desire that created Raël

Or was it Jaffa that created desire?
The origin could have its origin.
It could be, could be.

It could be that the sun shines
Because I desire it to shine or else
That I desire it to shine because it shines.

# MARGUERITE YOUNG:

## *The Trains*

And glassy sparrows wheel, wheel transparent
In polar winds, the daylight owl views sorrowful,
His eye beaming. And then the train's beams
Light earth awhile, as on each separate brown bough

There do butterflies cling disguised
As moribund leaves, in a steel season.

And the train whistles, rounding a bend as starlight
Curves on the sun, yet signifying not
the dove's return
But Columbus proving the bleak earth was round.

And frozen clouds of smoke cannot realize
Angel or phantom in the night's cold winds,

Where now the head is detached from the body,
Where now no birds can cross the gulf between
Man and his angel, for the great gulf roars like surf

Motion, and only the owl stares from the mute center.
But yet there are both mental surf and angel,

But yet there is an angel mental as man,
Is a stranger's wayfaring face against each window
In the interior light, in the train's gold flood,

Whose face, whose, the mild eyes peering
Even at earth, the blank of pastoral fields,
Whose, the mild eyes seeing through the sad snow valid,
Earth, the blank of the passing, vagrant fields.

# IVAN GOLL:

## *John Landless Cleansed by the Void*

**Translated by Clark Mills**

Under the circular moon a bath
Of chlorine waters my distress
At springs of phosphorus I drink
The spell of total nothingness

A sleeper in the asbestos town
I wander the oblivious halls
The openings of terrible doors
Watch where the dreaming lover falls

My steps are numb and without weight
Amidst the blackened bitter salt
Of night: bereft of recollection
I march against the heavenly vault

And stumble past the fallen columns
That once held up the roof of time
A moment more my spinal column
Towers over the dead stone and lime

In mines of silence you might have
Hidden the cry of cries and kept
The key that opens fears and trances
But you leaned back instead and slept

Go! Go! You never will deserve
A radiant morning free from doubt
Crucified by the commonplace
Your poor heart rots your blood goes out

John without Land: what if you are!
And without Baal and Grail and love and friend
You are but hair glands viscera
Without beginning without end

Crow perched upon my spine: my friend
With beak that living flesh must feel
Cleanse every shadow from my bones
Be more ferocious than bare steel

Oh take away what I contain
Like ore my subterranean dreams
That through my frozen loins may pass
Impenetrable cold in streams

And take my wild and futile dance
And what I know of hours and men
And my intolerable luck
To have been and not to have been

And may my sorry skeleton
More bare than when it first was mine
Be haunted only by the storm
And by the sun male and divine

# KATHERINE ANN PORTER:

## *Affectation of Praehimininincies, Part II*

Cotton had committed an indiscretion in the belief that his father was all-powerful. His father's failure to revenge Cotton's personal wrongs gave a severe check to his faith, and threw him into a new phase of doubts and inner searchings. He saw himself for the first time in direct relation to a world existing outside of himself, grossly self-sufficient, powerful, intractable, immersed in affairs utterly strange to him, entrenched in a point of view not his, and, above all, personally hostile to him. Hitherto he had cultivated a self-doubt, spiritual humiliation, as a rite. In his conflicts with God, with Evil, with his own soul, he emerged finally triumphant always. In his first encounter with the world, the monster he was born to control and to win for God, he was defeated, bruised, and left prostrate.

Moreover, in his anxiety to uphold his own prestige at college, he had brought on a premature crisis in his father's affairs, embarrassed his cause, and thrown the whole orderly procession off the track. It was a symptomatic episode: he had begun his dual career of assistant and obstructionist to his father. The long struggle between filial piety and ambitious self-interest was on. He had meant to be a spiritual lord of life in college, and he had simply precipitated a rather nasty row involving his father in a series of undignified gestures. He fell into gloom, for if he dimmed the radiance of his father, he darkened all his own prospects. No Mather was ever lacking in self esteem, and all of them believed, in their more exalted moments, that the world was in substantial agreement with their estimate of themselves. For Cotton, this encounter with a group of lads carefully selected from his own caste, but never quite his equals, for that was impossible, dedicated like himself to a life of holiness in the sacred vocation, gave him a problem in realism very hard to reconcile with his stubborn fantasy of personal grandeur.

He bore it badly. He fell into a deep self-pity and wept in a chagrin that he tried vainly to metamorphose into a state of penitence and purification. It was quite hopeless: he was lost, rejected of God and man, there was no refuge from his inner demon. He suddenly began to stammer again, and all the careful work of his childhood was swept away. The fear of death took hold of him: no literary invention this time, no planned invitation to pleasant horror, no fixed contemplation of the King of Terrors until the imagination was lashed into a foam. Perfect cold inexorable fear crept into his flesh and along his nerves: death became a reality to him. This brought on a long course of afflictions; he feared he had sinned away his day of grace, as the hopeless Calvinistic phrase would have it. He was driving himself unmercifully at his studies, because now above all times he must stand at the head of his classes. He quarreled quietly and

bitterly with his cousin John Cotton: and afterwards spent long hours examining his conscience, appalled at what he found there. Night after night he lay sweating and sleepless, clenched upon himself, waiting for the stroke of death, with his soul in disorder and unable to prepare itself for eternity. The foulness of his thoughts and the abominable behavior of his body disconcerted utterly that portion of his mind dedicated to the intellectual pursuit of sainthood. Until now his sins had been mostly rhetorical, he accused himself in general of all the enormities, not knowing what they might be, but in his blithe vanity assuming that he was the chief of sinners. Now in his adolescent upheavals, his pains and monstrous dreams and nervous shudderings, his uncontrollable mental and physical states, he recognized the precise, full nature of sin, and his moral collapse threatened to become complete. He believed his shocking experiences to be unique in the world, and shameful beyond words, and he went with a sense of guilt within, and, what was always terrifying to him, a fear of losing his reputation if any one should suspect his infamous state.

At home, his brothers Samuel and Nathaniel were violently ill. They had worms, the plague of children in that day. Nathaniel and then Samuel almost yielded up the ghost in prolonged vomiting attacks. Cotton went home and Maria clasped again this most beloved of her children, and they spent a long dark day of tears together, praying for the sick. Increase was almost afraid to pray, for the cause seemed lost: "Now I thought it might be some discouragement to Cotton in case he should see his poor sinful father's prayers were not heard; yet I humbly pleaded it with God."

Salad oil and a clyster were also invoked, and ipecac, and the poor little wretches were dragged through to life. In this moment of relief, Cotton confided the state of his soul, more burdened than any flesh could be, to his father.

He found comfort. His father was not horrified. On the contrary, he was much encouraged at these signs of the death struggle of the Old Adversary in his son. He explained it all so clearly: that these agonies were the first signs of true conversion: and they spent the evenings praying and reading and talking together in the quiet study, among the friendly books, far from the bitter distractions of the world. These hours were very calming to them both, for Cotton was tranquilized to learn that his bodily rebellions were not new in the history of the soul's adventures, and Increase felt growing up by his side a confidant and disciple. Their companionship grew towards equality, and Increase began to confide somewhat of his interests and his problems with his ungrateful and sinful congregation, and those obdurate, hard-hearted fellows of the Corporation who were undoubtedly ruining Harvard.

Increase Mather was very quietly doing a dangerous and subversive thing in a political way. Two of the regicides, Whalley and his son-in-law, Goffe, were mouldering in perpetual exile in Connecticut. Increase was one of their agents, and he protected them well, sending and receiving their

letters for them, and managing their affairs so adroitly that they were never apprehended. Cotton learned with awe that his admirable fathe could defy the King of England for reasons of conscience: that New Eng land was a separate country owing no loyalty to any power but the Con gregationalist church: and of all the factions within this sacred edifice the faction headed and controlled by his father was in the right. Hi spirits revived, their joint defeat at the college seemed less important.

Though one single Synod had refuted eighty-two heresies, thus outt stripping Arius by two, yet new ones cropped up like wild grass, an Increase was kept busy quoting his father and his father-in-law at th heretics, with added doctrine of his own. By now they had almost for gotten Calvin, only his tremendous idea, borrowed from Zwingli, remained and the struggle set up in the ordinary mind by the doctrine of predesti nation had resolved itself into a mere Manichean warfare between th almost equally matched, separate and authoritative powers of good an evil. Increase Mather was a scourge to the provincial theologians, risin at them in this fashion:

"As for your errors respecting discipline, sacraments, their covenants etc., I can bear with them yea, and these Arminian heterodoxia respectin Christ's dying for these reprobates doth not much trouble me. But you denying the meritorious obedience of Christ is such desperate heresy a no man that liveth with Jesus Christ in the Christian religion can i sincerity . . . bear with. Nevertheless, I still desire to respect you, an earnestly beseech Christ to let you see your error."

After receiving a letter or two of this kind, the startled rural prophe would ordinarily sink into a permanent silence.

On such examples Cotton formed his style and his point of view. H improved on them both with stouter language and even denser stubborn ness. His character was now definitely formed, his mind at fourteen hac reached the limit of its growth: all else afterward was mere expansion i the sense of things observed and memorized, a collected mass of informa tion, but the actual capacity of his mind was measured finally at adoles cence. He was a typical wonder-child.

Now his personality exhibited strange contradictions. He laughed an wept easily, and though tears were comprehensible to those about him, hi tendency to merriment was very disconcerting. He lacked the sober caustic humor and hard cruel wit which appertained to the character of the Eng lish Puritan: possibly to all Puritans of all races and epochs. His gayety was spontaneous if somewhat nervous, and because he believed it sprang from an unworthy levity in his nature he tried to suppress it. This i turn led him to attempt an impressive dignity and profundity of manner which degenerated into sheer youthful pomposity, and caused him to suf fer some ridicule in other places than Harvard. This was the beginning of his hysteria and habit of making frightful puns. At first he made them as jests, hoping to amuse his hearers. Later the habit became automatic and he played on words in contexts that shocked his hearers: that do

indeed, startle the reader even today. (John Cotton, for suavity and gentleness, he described outright as a "soft bag of Cotton," and he lamented that the stone from which Richard Mather suffered proved to be his tombstone.) He was bemused by the mysteries of his physical being and hoped to conquer himself by systematic discipline. He prayed intensively by rule, and began to increase his days of fasting in secret, and to read erudite treatises on the mechanics of meditation. Thus early he was an expert technician, and was forever inventing exercises calculated to advance his cause in Heaven, and on earth. After a fast he always felt more authoritatively spiritual, and this would call to mind the lost state of his little brothers and sisters. They had their own schemes for personal piety, and they could seldom be persuaded to follow his lead in devotion. It was the Mather pride. They would do their own praying. Nathaniel was especially individualistic. He ended by influencing Cotton.

For some years it was nip and tuck between Cotton and his brother Nathaniel for the family laurels of sainthood. "It may be truly written on his grave that study killed him," Cotton wrote long afterward. "His candle would burn until after midnight, until, as his own phrase has it, he thought his very bones would fall asunder." Nathaniel's bones were troublesome at best. He was so frail he could not walk until far past the time for walking. Horrible pains in his joints crippled him recurrently for long periods: he suffered an epileptic stroke that affected his tongue, and for several years he stammered worse than his brother. Even in this state, and handicapped by six years juniority, he threatened to outpace Cotton not only in piety but in learning.

The Mather pride afflicted him to a degree, and he awakened the conscience of Cotton, who, being proud with a difference, might have gone all his life mistaking this dark voice for a virtue, except for Nathaniel who overlooked nothing. When Nathaniel abased himself for whittling a stick on Sunday, and, for fear of being seen, hid himself behind a door while he whittled, Cotton could do no less than search himself for misdeeds even more subtle: they called themselves atheists, and admitted with mutual tears that they deserved hell. They supplemented each other admirably: while Cotton assisted Nathaniel in languages and mathematics, Nathaniel assisted Cotton in the finer points of moral self-torture. All of the children ate, drank, and breathed despair of God's mercy, and their sufferings began even in babyhood. Later, when he was editing his private papers, Cotton destroyed his own records until his eighteenth year, but preserved Nathaniel's long monotonous plaints of mental and bodily disease. He perceived that Nathaniel had a literary style worth his study. In keeping his own diary afterwards, he selected from his brother's papers many passages that he felt were equally pertinent to his state, and copied them in as his own entries. "O make my tongue a Tree of Life," sang poor Nathaniel, and the phrase seemed such a happy one it reappears regularly through all the years of Cotton's own petitions.

Nathaniel wrote: "What shall I do? *What shall I do to be saved?*

Without a Christ, I am *undone, undone* forevermore! O for a Christ! O for a Christ! Lord give me a Christ or I die!" These are the unpleasant rhythms of a misplaced emphasis: and to increase the confusion, both brothers were confused about their sexual status. Both of them sought their God in the role of vestal virgins. Nathaniel at this time, and Cotton much later, employed a curious symbolism. "Oh, Lord Jesus, I come to thee! Who am I that I should be married to the King of Glory? I do accept Thee for my head and husband."

The family interests and interior distractions did not prevent Cotton from achieving the highest record for scholarship at Harvard. He mastered Hebrew beyond the requirements, and began to compile his own systems of physics and logic. His vacations were spent in his father's library, where he read himself into headaches, and cudgelled his brains to think up new religious exercises.

Daily he rose from the family table, an abundant board where he enjoyed himself sinfully, and repaired to his study, there to invite an attack of indigestion by instructing himself in doctrine and meditation on the state of his soul. The house was not large, and Maria Mather had almost completed her work of bringing ten children into the world. Slaves, bonded servants, and visiting relations were stowed away somehow, and by excellent management father and eldest son were comfortably secluded in separate studies. Cotton, pacing measuredly back and forth, would select a theme. Doctrinally he posed himself a question. He then considered the causes, the effects, the adjuncts, as well as the opposites and resemblances of his theme. As his theme was invariably himself, his sinfulness, the question how best he might repent and stand well in the sight of God, he arrived logically at a general examination of his conscience, which resolved inevitably into a minute consideration of concrete sins; in the course of events there followed a severe expostulation with himself, and at last a resolution, increasing in imaginative momentum, to repent on the strength of the grace offered with the new Covenant.

The results were monotonously the same. Terror would strike through his carefully contrived defenses, the true and awful meaning of these words and ceremonies would suddenly become clear, shattered he would fall to the floor weeping and imploring to be saved from eternal damnation. All his uncertainties and disappointments would rush upon him, and he would sob dolefully with his forehead on the floor. Later he would rise, make himself tidy, for he was fastidious in his dress, and, seated at his desk, he would record his crisis in detail, with pride and self-congratulation in his achievement.

At home everything was quite perfect. No one disturbed or criticized him, friends and parents admired him fondly, and even in far-away England Uncle Nathaniel was aware of his nephew's importance. He thought Cotton a remarkable child and sent him a "Brachygraphic fitted to the Latin tongue," and insisted that he learn it at once and teach it to his

brothers and sisters. Himself, he had not time nor patience for it, it looked very difficult, but shorthand was a branch of learning he desired to see in the family. It had the prestige of novelty and exclusiveness: "Brachygraphic is not known nor practised anywhere in Europe but in England." The gift and the advice went unregarded, and he wrote anxiously about his character-book, saying he had been unable to find another. Cotton Mather depended on longhand to the end of his days.

In this same year there are other glimpses of Cotton seen outside the official biographical records of his youth. Uncle John Cotton, minister at Plymouth, was head of a household reasonably afflicted, reasonably pious and somehow cheerful. As a small-town pastor he was aware that his family lacked the advantages of the metropolis. Also he seemed to have forgotten the little incident of his son helping to terrorize Cotton at Harvard two years before. He was continually writing to his sister Maria, enclosing a few shillings and wanting in return a piece of sealing wax, or several yards of good black cotton ribbon or a modest length of green galoon. At times he wished his sister to buy these things on credit at the same shop where she had bought his wife's cloak and he would pay for all in the spring. He sent an occasional barrel of good salt beef for their winter use, and in turn he hoped they would take his son John under their roof for counsel and prayer. No denying, the contrast between young John and his cousin Cotton was so marked that even John's father must admit and deplore it. He would make up all expense by sending tubs of butter and other necessities.

Increase was in no particular haste to grant this request, for later still another inducement was offered: John Cotton was training a little negro slave for his dear brother in Christ Increase. The child was only seven but would be very useful for cutting wood and drawing water. He was being properly prepared for these duties, for even now he could answer the question, Who made him?

Then he wrote suggesting an alternative: "Concerning your son Cotton, that he may live here with me this winter: God hath given him grace, and his learning is above what those of his standing have usually attained to, whence he is able to do good to others: and you know it is recorded as the honour of your blessed father that at fifteen years he was called to be a schoolmaster; and why may not his grandson have it put into the records of his life, that before that age he was accounted worthy to be so employed?"

The third John Cotton was hopelessly in arrears with his studies, and his lately persecuted cousin was being haled to the rescue. Cotton was to have comfortable board free of charge. He would return to Boston in the spring with five pounds of silver in his pocket, besides what money other Plymouth families would be happy to pay him for private tutoring. He should have the tenderest treatment, and, as a final argument, it was suggested that the change of air might save Cotton from the smallpox, for Boston was in the midst of one of its frequent plagues.

Cotton could not be tempted by anything. The trouble with his uncles

on both sides of the family was that they could not comprehend the altitude of his destiny. Shorthand! What had he to do with that? Tutoring? He did not in the least desire to compete with his grandfather Mather on these grounds, and the money was no inducement. He was perfectly comfortable at home. He remained at Harvard and near his father. Into the records of his life went a very grand letter to his Uncle John:

"I know your candour will not charge me with idleness. Your courtesy will not implead me for forgetfulness, and most of all, you will not without reason accuse me of unwillingness to serve you in what I may, even *usque ad aras*, and if possible, there." He then pleaded delicate health, and "uncertainty of conveyance, and that again seconded by other evocations." He was in fact a busy and important young man, and his Plymouth relations quite evidently needed to be reminded of it. Yet he was not without his generous will to helpfulness. He called upon his muddied shoes to testify how unweariedly he sought the Plymouth boat, "who," (the shoes) "in this time when Boston is become another Lutetia (q. *luto sata*) do proclaim they wanted a pair of goloshooes when travelling near the dock-head." He declared he would fling salt upon the tail of time, or persuade the wind and tide to be favorable to his design if he had the power: but he had not. In short he labored to prove his scholarship and let his uncle know he had no intention of burying himself in Plymouth during the winter season of study.

Then he turned to a subject made for his pen. "Never was it such a time in Boston. Boston burying places never filled so fast. It is easy to tell the time when we did not use to have the bells tolling for burials on a Sabbath day by sunrise: to have seven buried on a Sabbath night after meeting. To have coffins crossing each other as they have been carried in the street:—to have, I know not how many corpses following each other close at their heels—to have thirty-eight die in one week." Still, smallpox or no, he would not come to Plymouth. Providence had been tender in his own family. He had been touched slightly. Brother Nathaniel and sister Sarah also, but sister Maria went out of her head for several days and they feared to lose her. His father's prayers had been responsible undoubtedly for the mildness of this affliction, yet he assured his uncle he was even now preparing himself for the worst, in case Providence should suffer a change of mood.

This air of royal condescension towards his Plymouth relations was a faithful reflection of his father's attitude. The family correspondence was a little one-sided. John Cotton was always affectionately respectful, a little apologetic. He was the poorer of the two, but was always offering small tributes. He was always pressed for money and trying to explain it: he was after all unable to send the little negro because there were no clothes in the house fit to send him in. The Mathers replied seldom, in the tone of those who held the deciding vote. The near relations were often mystified by the inexplicable remoteness of their distinguished kinsmen. Time and again they forgot themselves and treated the Mathers quite simply. They were soon recalled to a sense of their impropriety.

# DAVID DAICHES:

## *Five Poets*

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD: *Long View.* Harpers.

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN: *The Garden Is Political.* MacMillan.

R. P. BLACKMUR: *The Second World.* Cummington Press.

ROBERT PENN WARREN: *Eleven Poems on the Same Theme.* New Directions (Poet of the Month for March).

HILDEGARDE FLANNER: *If There Is Time.* New Directions (Poet of the Month for May).

If any one thinks that there is a poetic style which can be called simply the "contemporary style," he ought to read these five volumes. And the same cure is recommended for those who maintain that people aren't writing poetry any more. These are five very different and, on the whole, very impressive volumes of verse, all published between March and May of this year. And they by no means exhaust the spring crop. So, before I proceed to discuss the poets one at a time, I feel it necessary to sound this introductory note of optimism.

Whatever faults the sharp-eyed critic may find in the poetry of Genevieve Taggard, no one can deny that she possesses both a sense of language and a sense of humanity—and what else is poetry but the most effective welding of these two? In this her latest book of verse she gives us the products of her observations of the world and of herself in a poetic language that is sometimes urgent, sometimes slack, that is sometimes well cadenced and well disciplined and sometimes harsh and careless: but always we recognize a poet, if sometimes a poet who knows what she wants to say before she knows that she wants to write poetry. There are two antithetical (in a sense) ways of producing poetry: you can be interested primarily in the poetic medium, and search for experiences rich and complex enough to employ to the full the resources of the medium—or even create an experience out of playing with the medium; or you can be interested primarily in content, in communicating something, in which case the temptation will be to blind yourself with your ideas or your emotions so that the verses you have written are never clearly separated from those ideas or emotions, are never objectified into a new birth but remain attached by the navel string to the mother. These two ways of producing poetry have each appropriate faults: the first way can result in craftsmanship without art, or in preciosity or pretentious silliness or brittle virtuosity, and occasionally some of these faults are to be found in Genevieve Taggard's very earliest poetry. But ever since she has become dominated by her social conscience the important thing for her has become to get across the content, and rather than lose the original idea she puts it down raw. Now in writing poetry we must be prepared to lose the original idea, we must be prepared occasionally to surrender our insight to the medium, and leave the result to heaven. The final meaning of the poem is, it is generally conceded, never to be equated with any prose paraphrase; but neither is it to be equated with the thing the poet originally wanted said. That is why the poetry of single ideas (*In Memoriam*) tends to be less good than the poetry of multiple ideas (the best of Donne) — not because good poetry requires many ideas, but because in playing with a diversity of conceptions you are less likely to let one idea tyrannize over the poem and more likely to allow the form to work the sea change that distinguishes poetic from other kinds of statement.

All this is by way of preamble to the statement that Genevieve Taggard is a good poet, an interesting poet, whose work displays, nevertheless, more often than it ought to, the kinds of fault associated with the second of the two methods of writing poetry already indicated. One has the feeling that even her theory of song (contained in the sketchy "Notes on Writing Words for Music" at the end of the book) is less a theory of song than a group of ideas she feels it necessary to express for quite other reasons. Perhaps she is right; perhaps it is impossible to approach any aesthetic problem simply as an aesthetic problem; but the fact remains that her poetry is often exciting without being memorable just because the cadence, the image, the organization, are a trifle too raw, not adequately *distilled* (which is not to say the poems were written too quickly: I would judge that they were written slowly and carefully).

If one must specify, consider, then, these lines:

> Inside our wall we will today pursue
> The man we call the alien, take his print,
> Give him a taste of the thing from which he fled,
> Suspicion him. And again we fail.
> How shall we release his virtue, his good-will
> If by such pressure we hold his life in jail?

The last two lines in particular of this extract are good sense but not good poetry. Th tendency to equate good sense with good poetry is the opposite error from that whic assumes that good poetry is naturally and inevitably obscure or paradoxical in its intellectua content.

The individual image in Miss Taggard's poetry is almost always better poetically tha the logic of the imagery—*i. e.*, the order and rhythms with which the images are arrange Her fault, then, (and it is by no means in all the poems of this volume) is a defective poeti logic. Poems like "Chant for the Great Negro Poet of America Not Yet Born" are flat nc because the individual images are unimpressive or because the ideas are not interesting, bu because the poems, without being immature (Miss Taggard is after all a wary and experience poet), are *unmatured.*

But it is easy for the critic to be patronizing, and less difficult to demonstrate weaknes than to explain virtues. The final word in any discussion of Genevieve Taggard's poetry mus be a word of praise, however qualified, however long the circumscribing appendix. This i bright and honest writing, free from the smell of the lamp or the exhibitionist's gyrations, poetry full of fresh and violent imagery, unconstrained, popular in a very real sense. Th lyric "Range, Range the Words Around," parts of the longish poem "First," "Long View (where the poetry of simple statement is really appropriate and effective) with its strangel simple and dignified close—these are things to remember and to be grateful for. If Geneviev Taggard does not produce the greatest kind of poetry, at least it can be said, and said em phatically, that a nation which produced poets like her would be, poetically and in profounde ways, in a healthy and hopeful state.

John Malcolm Brinnin is of a younger generation, and writes a very different kind c poetry, more closely packed, more carefully modulated, more artful. Though Mr. Brinnin a young man of twenty-five, his poems have a poise and a cunning that Miss Taggard's lac One has only to open the book and read the first stanza of the first poem:

> The shifty limpet on his rocky shore
> Contrives a conch to make life possible,
> And the unbelievable giraffe achieves
> A dainty salad from the lissom tree.
> Pretending he is flora in the pond,
> A silly fish will emulate a frond
> To trick the appetite that savors him;
> A rabbit in the snow will do the same.

A poet in his early twenties who can use language in this deceptively quiet way ha already gone further than many poets ever go. His technical skill is quite impressiv He can handle the image, as in the fine poem "The Alps"; he knows how to choose adjective ("Far, far along the water-punished coast, / Embittered with the palisades of ice, / Thos sea-neurotic settlements will send / Their anguished arms of smoke toward winter's end") he can handle description ("Vermont: 7 p. m.") and speculation ("Visiting Card for Emily" with equal poetic effect, and he can also blend both in a single poem ("The Georgian House" In short, Brinnin is a young poet of importance, and if he continues as he has begun is due t play a dominating role in contemporary poetry.

It is a spoken poetry that he writes, unlike much of Miss Taggard's which calls fc external music to synthesize the cadences. He is most successful with a slow-moving, five stressed line: indeed, the iambic pentameter is the basis of most of his verse, but he handle it with originality and skill. The verses are often difficult, too tightly packed sometimes, to recherché in thought or expression; but at his best Brinnin shows a rare ability to combin tradition and experiment. Most important of all, even in his most obfuscated moments h always talks like a poet.

R. P. Blackmur talks like a poet, too, but a poet who (going to the opposite extrem from Genevieve Taggard) has so surrendered his insight to the medium that it tends to l lost altogether. We are often left with nothing but a subtle stretching of language, whic is sufficiently poetic to convince us that it took its origin in some communicable complex c thought and emotion but not sufficiently explicit so as really to communicate to the reade anything but a sense of virtuosity in action. With all the experience the modern reader c poetry has had with the seventeenth-century metaphysicals and their modern followers, wit all his admiration for Donne, Hopkins and the later Yeats, he can get little from many c Blackmur's poems except simply the impression of a subtle mind spinning. Let me spea honestly in the first person, for I have no right to speak for others. In many of Blackmur poems, I can find no clue—however attentively I read, however much I try to surrender t the poem itself—to the organization of the images, no key to the pattern of symbols. Yet th feeling persists that there is something here worth pursuing. I should like to understand th significance of the imagery and its ordering in, say, "The Idea of a Christian Society," bu in spite of the key in the quotation from Empson I find it impossible to see the poem as whole. The first stanza is not in itself obscure:

The acute old men may refuse to read Dante,
Yet like him they connive at the dead while alive,
*The peekaboo inside us; let it be*
For they also have sharp faces, play stud penny ante
Looking twice at each face card and holding each ace
*This hugger mugger rising; let it be.*

But I find it difficult without some special pleading which goes far outside the poem to relate the pattern of meaning contained in this stanza and its subsequent elaboration to the conclusion, the final group of images and statements.

The final poem, "The Dead Ride Fast," is the only one where the handling of thought and image seems to me to result in an effective pattern of poetic statement. I have the feeling that in most of these poems the obscurity is the result of over-intellectualized myth, the use of symbols whose meaning derives from an undiscoverable set of propositions or ideas. I have deliberately become autobiographical in discussing Blackmur's poems because I do not want to be dogmatic about the matter: obscurity is a subjective thing, and if I find that the parts of a poem do not come together as I read them, I must record it as my experience rather than as definitely a fault in the poem. Yet I suspect the fault does lie in the poem.

A clearer pattern emerges from the collection as a whole than from any individual poem. It is a kind of "Waste Land" with just the same dry, reluctant note of hope at the end that we get in Eliot's famous poem. The poems taken together breathe a fathomless pessimism, a pessimism born of too much wisdom, of self-defeating knowledge, as though the poet is so disillusioned that he does not really expect any one even to see what he means—so he spins his patterns in weary contempt of the world. To ignore your readers is in a sense to despise them. Is Blackmur's problem simply that he cannot make up his mind whether those who read his poetry are to be congratulated or despised?

Robert Penn Warren, writing in a not dissimilar frame of mind, handles his symbols more successfully. Here the mythology is adequate to the theme, so that image, incident, and the idea blend into a unity whose pattern is distinguishable and whose significance is discernible. There is a clean use of language in these eleven poems, as though the poet had wiped his pen at the beginning of every line, and the contrast between white clarity of image and complexity of the idea which the image is helping to build is often most effective. "Picnic Remembered" is perhaps the best example in the collection of fresh-water images turning out to be strong drink. The poem opens:

That day, so innocent appeared
The leaf, the hill, the sky, to us,
Their structures so harmonious

And pure, that all we had endured
Seemed quaint disaster of a child,
Now cupboarded, and all the wild
Grief cancelled; so with what we feared.

But in further stanzas the poet draws out the implications of the original images one by one, and the poem ends not with a statement but a question:

Or is the soul a hawk that, fled
On glimmering wings past vision's path,
Reflects the last gleam to us here
Though sun is sunk and darkness near
—Uncharted Truth's high heliograph?

The abstract emerges naturally from the concrete; thought emerges from the proper manipulation of imagery. If these poems have a fault, it is a certain faintness of accent ("Original Sin: A Short Story" is a pianissimo treatment of a theme which demands, in parts at least, double forte), a timidness in the pressing of the keys. So that we think of Robert Penn Warren as one of our better minor poets, not as one of those who contend for the highest honors.

Miss Flanner's collection I should have taken for a first volume if the note on the wrapper had not informed me that she had "written a number of earlier books" and is "now near the height of her powers." I should have made this mistake not simply because of my own unfortunate ignorance of her earlier work, but because these poems have many of the virtues and some of the faults of a good poet in the first stage of his career. For instance, Miss Flanner seems to know more ways of expressing a situation than she has situations to express; there is here an excitement with language, and what appears to be a thirst to write poetry before any theme has suggested itself. The images spill out, musically, arrestingly, and consequently the poet hastens to think up a theme to which they refer. I am not saying that this is the way the poems were written (though it is possible) but it is the effect many of them give. Thus in spite of the specificness of the titles of these poems, one has the feeling that the interest might just as well have been turned to something else, and different poems written.

This is perhaps a clumsy way of saying that this poetry has skill and (often) grace, th there is a keen and lively handling of imagery, a plastic sense of rhythm; yet often the cc tents spill over the mold—there is too much poetry for the poem. If this is a fault, it is hopeful one.

Diagnosis of this kind is, however, liable to miss the mark: one thinks up a thesis account for one's reactions to the poetry, and no sooner has the thesis been written out th one becomes dubious of it. What I have said about Miss Flanner's poetry is not to be tak to mean that it lacks "ideas." Her characteristic strain is a thoughtful lyricism. Should t thought be introduced for the sake of the lyric or the lyric be written to express the though The very fact that some of these poems make one want to ask this meaningless question indication of some lack of perfect welding of skill to insight. But both skill and insight a there, and Miss Flanner has the gifts of a real poet. Which brings me back to my earli point: these poems have the qualities one would expect of a young, and potentially first-ra poet.

## JAMES LAUGHLIN:

MARY McCARTHY: *The Company She Keeps.* Simon & Schuste

This book has been enormously talked about, in the East at least, and mostly, I thin for the wrong reasons. It is obviously very much fun to gossip about who the real or unre persons in certain of the tales may or may not be (and I have even heard one young lady s that she had absolute proof that the man in the famous shirt was Wendell Willkie) but it hardly important in the long flow of serious American writing. And I do think that Mi McCarthy's writing is now, in patches, and, if she develops in the right way, can come to altogether, that kind and quality of writing. I submit this opinion on the basis of her sty (at its best)—of the relation of the style to the forms she uses, and of its relation to the spok language of the time.

The construction of the book is clever—a sequence of sketches of phases in the heroin life, each seen from a different angle. Then you finish with an account of the girl's bei analyzed, which pulls the different shots together. But the impact is not in the build of t novel; it is in occasional patches of writing where, for a page, or only a few lines, to language, intention, figures, all blend perfectly into a fluid, easy, terribly convincing mediu I don't feel that Miss McCarthy is imitating Fitzgerald, but it is the kind of thing Fitzgera was often able to do, and on which he clearly set great importance.

And it is certainly an important thing when a writer is able to bring off very subt discriminations and figures without any sign of strain or feeling of being Jacobin, using t same corpus of words that intelligent Americans use in their daily speech. What it amoun to is being literary (producing the statements and intensifications of meaning that good writi is supposed to produce) without being "literary" (that is, putting words together in a w that strikes the normal ear as odd and out of the world.) There are some passages in th novel where conversation, description and author's interpretation in terms of very subtle a abstract figures all flow together in close sequence without any change in the tone of the sty I think that is important.

What company shall we request Miss McCarthy to keep during the years while her ne novel is being written? I hope she will not let her head be turned and drift in the directi of clever, easy, gossipy, super-slick journalese. She could do that sort of thing without liftin a finger and probably make a lot of money. I hope instead she will keep company with t austere ghost of Fitzgerald and others who wrote with the same seriousness and give us book where whole chapters will have that wonderfully fluid unity of idiom.

## CHARLES SHATTUCK:

WILLIAM FAULKNER: *Go Down, Moses, and Other Stories.* Random House.

JAMES T. FARRELL: *$1000 a Week and Other Stories.* Vanguard Press.

These two volumes, together with the four reviewed by Arthur Carr in the last issue c *Accent,* mark the season's generosity in volumes of short stories. Neither of these, perhap merits quite the enthusiastic welcome accorded by Mr. Carr to Eudora Welty's *A Curtain o Green,* the voices of Faulkner and Farrell being long since well-known, their names becom household words (or household bogies, depending on the households.) You know what t expect.

Faulkner's book is the more interesting, is indeed excellent, and well may be for Faulk

erites a *locus classicus* of Faulknerism. For in the bulk of the writing he is working from ne family history, digging up his own roots as it were, hungering avidly after the meaning n regional lore. His theme is, as ever, the land-bound, tradition-bound culture of the South; nd he renders it at once mystic and earthy, tragic and hi arious, beautiful and damned. The est of the South, he seems to say (take with caution this or any other simplification of aulkner's meaning), is in its half-breeds—in Sam Fathers, Boon Hoggenbeck, Lucas Beauhamp—who are mystical y intimate with earth; the sterility of the South is in its tradition f white sovereignty.

I for one should still protest Faulkner's affectation of disregard for the reader, his avalier dismissal of honest exposition. I doubt that except as trademark the affectation has ver gained him anything. But it is an old and small quibble. Far more important is to ecognize the vast textural enrichment in Faulkner since the days of *Sanctuary*. He who nce courted naughtiness and prank to shock old ladies and tickle the boys now sees, interprets, and makes prose ike a grown man. He sounds generous, as if he owned the world he ives in and rather enjoys exhibiting it, or even giving large hunks of it away.

Farrell's collection does not hold up very well. Many of the pieces were written in the arly 30's, in the mode of social protest. And while I freely recognize their sometime usefulness in making the Will of God prevail, I can't he p seeing them now as battered, nicked, and somewhat rusted tools. Now and then the animus of satire lifts one of them above its occasion (see the lash fall on the Lower Middle Classes in "Whoopee for the New Deal"; on Bohemia in "Getting out the Vote for the Working Class"; on Rugged Individualism in "The Fate of a Hero.") And "A Short Story," a brief, four-page abstraction, I take to be a brilliant epitome of the tragic theme of *Studs Lonigan*. But in general, it seems to me, a short story by Farrell is an anomaly, like a teaspoonful of crushed rock. He writes big things best. I'll take my Farrell in carload lots.

## KERKER QUINN:

### NEW DIRECTIONS 1941, edited by James Laughlin.

In the six years since James Laughlin transformed his literary section in the Social Credit magazine, *New Democracy*, into an independently published yearbook, *New Directions* has quadrupled in size, in number of contributors and, I hope, in number of readers. But as one might expect, the number of critical attacks has multiplied correspondingly: reviewers have swung violently away from the respectful treatment generally accorded a "struggling new venture" and are vying with each other in trying to pop niggerbaby Laughlin off his perch. The three longest notices of the current volume I've seen—by George Barker in the *Nation*, by Randall Jarrell in *Partisan Review*, and by Clement Greenberg (an editor of *PR*) in the *New Republic*—are all of the merciless y sharpshooting variety.

Perhaps the stiff covers, suggesting a literary permanence for everything between them, lead reviewers to expect more of *New Directions* than of the monthly or quarterly miscellany with confessedly tentative contents. A magazine is not commonly damned by the reader who has found half of it good reading. Why can't a yearbook—an enlarged periodical and not to be confused with a long-range antho'ogy (which ought to be air-tight)—be evaluated with equal tolerance? If Laughlin has wasted some of his 730 pages on musty or misfired experimentalism, why not allow him the magazine editor's margin of error? If he has made bedfellows of MacDiarmid, Breton, and Mayakovsky, why not admit that the diversity is no greater than in the literary magazines (including *Partisan Review*) and just as defensible? And if he has made occasional slips in his Notes on Contributors, a reviewer (Mr. Jarrell) is i.l justified in devoting a paragraph to them, only to make a slip himself four lines later.

The "features" of *New Directions 1941* are, excepting a savorless verse play by Delmore Schwartz, what make it worth reading and what make its title still meaningful: "Mother Courage," Bertolt Brecht's people's play of the Thirty Years' War; "Azeff Wischmeier," George Mann's wise, if somewhat expansive satire on bureaucracy; Wright Morris's "Landscape with Figures," juxtaposing locale photographs and sharp character sketches; and "Soviet Russian Poetry," an anthology which is the best thing of its kind available, though not the best possible, for most of the poets are not fully enough represented to stand out as individuals, and not all the translators know poetry from water.

Among the smaller contributions, the stories of Ben Field, the late Roger Roughton, Helen Eustis, Meyer Liben, and H. J. Kaplan are exciting in their different ways. The critical pieces, as usual in the yearbook, lack solidity. The generous section of American poets contains many good things and several lackluster (there being but one inexcusably bad poem—by John Berryman, surprisingly); it offers no indication that Laughlin's Poet of the Month series is absorbing all the first-rate verse that is coming into his office.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID DAICHES, the young British writer who teaches at the University of Chicago, has just published *Virginia Woolf*, a critical study . . . IVAN GOLL, the celebrated French poet, now lives in New York; the Colt Press will soon issue a collection of his *Jean sans terre*

poems . . . JAMES LAUGHLIN is well known as a poet and a short-story writer, as well publisher of New Directions . . . CLARK MILLS, one of America's most active young poet is preparing an anthology of translations from modern French verse . . . KATHERIN ANNE PORTER'S forthcoming books are a novel, *No Safe Harbor,* and a biography Cotton Mather . . . WILMA SHORE lives in California; she is the daughter of Vio Brothers Shore, the novelist, and has contributed to *Story* . . . HARRY SLOCHOWER the author of *Thomas Mann's Joseph Story* and *Three Ways of Modern Man* . . . WALLAC STEVENS' first book of poems in five years, *Parts of a World,* is scheduled for Septemb . . . EUDORA WELTY'S *A Curtain of Green,* published last winter, was widely hailed the most interesting first book of stories in many years . . . MARGUERITE YOUNG, Indianapolis, is the author of *Prismatic Ground* and a frequent contributor of poetry literary magazines.

## A NOTE TO OUR READERS

**This, the last issue of Volume II, is 16 pages shorter than its predecessor We hope to return to our 64-page issue in the autumn. One of the few America periodicals which have depended almost exclusively on subscriptions (rather tha subsidies or advertising), ACCENT has, through careful budgeting of expense made those subscriptions suffice for its existence. Since December 7, howeve various factors have caused us to lose money: the increased cost of paper and prin ing, the induction of many subscribers into the armed forces, and the war jitte (which, for a time at least, misled some Americans into regarding literature as luxury that would have to be suspended for the duration).**

**We do not wish to allow the debt which we have incurred to kill ACCENT We are confident that, with caution and planning, readjustment to wartime econom is possible. The innumerable unsolicited letters from our readers and contributo indicate that we are not alone in considering the survival of ACCENT importan From Katherine Anne Porter, for instance: "I think ACCENT is the best of all th little magazines, and for me the little magazines are very important. I am in the debt, for they give me something to read, and they give me hope for the growth c serious writing. I wish you long life with all my heart." From Herbert J. Mulle "I'm glad that ACCENT is able to carry on—and with increasing distinction. From Erskine Caldwell: "I think you have a fine magazine, and I hope you keep i going, come hell or high water." From Austin Warren: "I ardently hope that yo will be able to keep going. Little magazines seem to me . . . instruments of civiliza tion. We need to exemplify what we defend."**

**We believe that, as we make plans for Volume III, we can count on the gene ous support of our readers. Here are ways in which you can help to guarante ACCENT'S survival:**

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**4. Contribute whatever you can afford to, beyond your subscription. $10 o $5 or even $1 will help us through this critical period.**

**5. Send us a list of your friends who might like to know about ACCENT, s that our circulars may reach them.**

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